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Islam and Communism

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE USSR

Edited by
JAAN PENNAR

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Islam and Communism

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Foreword

The present volume is a collection of essays based on the reports presented at a conference on *Islam and Communism* on June 25, 1960. The conference was sponsored by the Institute for the Study of the USSR, with headquarters in Munich, Germany. The essays included in this volume do not necessarily follow, verbatim, the oral presentation of the original reports. The authors were given the opportunity of expanding their reports or of making such editorial changes as they subsequently deemed necessary.

The morning session was chaired by Professor Tibor Halaši-Kun of Columbia University and the afternoon session by Professor Farhat Ziadeh of Princeton University. The conference was organized for the purpose of determining what interactions, if any, exist between Islam, communism, the Soviet Union, and the Arab world. The morning session was largely devoted to a discussion of the fate of Islam in Tsarist Russia and the USSR, and the afternoon session was devoted mainly to Soviet policy in the Middle East and communism in the Arab world. Responsibility for the contents of each presentation rests strictly with the author.

The Institute hopes that by publishing these essays it will bring to those interested in the subject, as well as to the lay reader, a better understanding not only of the forces that shape the policies and actions of the Soviet Union toward Islam, but also of the currents and counter-currents generated by communism in the Middle East.

The assistance of Mr. Will Klump and others both in organizing the conference and in subsequent editorial work is gratefully acknowledged.

New York, October 1960

JAAN PENNAR
Counselor on Institute Relations

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The Historical Impact of Islam in the Soviet Union

Richard Frye

In order to understand the position of Muslims in the Soviet Union day, one should recall the historical circumstances which led to the read of Islam in vast areas of what is today the territory of the SSR. A better understanding of Islam at the time of the Revolution d at the present will result from a survey of the past.

At the time the Kievan state was being formed in the tenth century D., Islam had already established a foothold among the Volga lgars. This probably basic Uralic people, as we know from the mous embassy of Ibn Fadlan from Baghdad in 922, had already dergone Turkification and was in the process of Islamization at that me. These two concepts, I believe, are key words for understanding lam in the Soviet Union.

It is significant that Islam came to the Volga area from Central sia, which had been conquered by the Arabs in the eighth century, t which had maintained earlier forms of mores and society into the lamic period of its history. Just as Sogdian merchants from Samarnd helped the spread of Islam in East Turkistan, so Khorezmian erchants brought Islam to the Volga. That the axis of trade was om northwest to southeast, rather than north-south over the Cauasus Mountains, we gather from many sources including a revealing mark by Yaqut, a thirteenth century geographer, that a certain Muslim merchant who lived in Merv had warehouses on the Volga nd in Gujarat, India. The Christian nations of the Georgians and rmenians, and the Khazars, whose aristocracy had been converted Judaism, also blocked contact between the Volga and the Caliphate Baghdad, thus isolating the Bulgars.

Khorezm was a center of Hanefite orthodoxy, hence it was no onder that the Hanefite rites prevailed among the Bulgars of the olga and indeed elsewhere in Russia down to the present. Because f the existence of the "orthodox" Sunni Samanid state in Transoxiana the tenth century the steppes escaped the extensive Shiite missionry propaganda of that time, and instead the missionaries to the urkish tribes were usually Hanefite preachers. It is significant to member that the term for a Muslim which we find in the early

Russian chronicles is Busurman or Beserman. This is the form of word "Musulman," which the Russians heard from Khorezmians way of the Volga Bulgars. Indeed, the word Beserman came to m later a person from Khiva or Bukhara.

Because of the early implanting of orthodoxy among the Vo Bulgars (later called Tatars), and because of the isolation from centers of Islam to the south, Islam in Russia remained stron orthodox and Kazan became the center of the religion. Of cou Central Asia, with its flourishing cities of Samarqand, Bukhara, a others, remained in contact with the rest of the Islamic world, Central Asia too was in a sense cut off by repeated invasions from steppes, and as a great center of Muslim culture it suffered grea from the Mongol conquest. It is the Mongol conquest in the thirteen century which, in a sense, marks the beginning of the modern histo of Islam.

As a result of the Mongol conquest, Turkish tribes moved acr south Russia, into Anatolia and elsewhere into the Islamic wo Turkish rulers dominated the scene almost down until the First Wo War. It became a commonplace in the Near East that the *imperi* belonged to the Turks, *magisterium* to the Persians, and *sacredoti* to the Arabs.

In Russia the Khanate of Kazan became a conservative center Islam where Arabic was cultivated as a sacred language. In the Crim and South Russia the Turkish peoples came under the cultural dom nation (as well as political for a time) of the powerful Ottom Empire. In Central Asia, however, constant warfare between the d scendants of Chaghatay, then of Timur, was ended only by the expa sion of the Uzbeks at the beginning of the sixteenth century. By th time the streets of the great cities were sprouting weeds, and t strong Shiite state of Safavid Persia had imposed a block betwe Central Asia and the Arab world. In Azerbaidzhan, Shiite and Persi influences were predominant.

One may recapitulate the situation of Islam in the territory of t USSR to the nineteenth century somewhat as follows: The Crime Tatars looked south across the Black Sea for their contacts and i spiration with little if any contact with other Muslims in the empi of the Tsars, except later with the Tatars of Kazan. The Azerbaidzha Muslims were closely tied to Persia in religion and in culture, thus once cut off from other Turkish peoples. In Central Asia the Uzbeks h split into a host of quarreling Khanates which had neither the resourc nor the ability to keep alive the past traditions of Islamic greatnes

netheless, in the chronicles of the Uzbek khans we do learn of a tain amount of intellectual and literary activity, the latter usually Persian, which kept Islam active. The Volga area people, on the e hand in direct contact with Muscovite expansion and on the other lated from other Muslims, preserved a conservative Islam based on abic. This we learn from the sparse writings coming from Kazan surroundings. That is the background picture of these four groups Muslims in Russia, and I use Russia and the Soviet Union as interangeable terms.

From all of this, it is important to note that only in Central Asia l a literary Turkic language develop. Elsewhere Arabic or Persian, reign tongues, were the vehicles of intellectual expression.

It was only in the later part of the nineteenth century after the arist empire had reached its final boundaries, that the Muslims came to real contact with each other on any scale. I suppose one could ace the origins of the pan-Turanian movement to Kazan and the olga Tatars, with some aid from the Crimean Tatars. Among edu- ted Tatars who spoke Russian at the higher schools or university, ho spoke Tatar to the peasants, and perhaps wrote and knew some rabic, concepts of a brotherhood of the Turkish peoples of Russia gan to ferment. Not being a historian of Russia, I am not concerned equate or derive such ideas from the Slavophils or the pan-Slavists the empire of the Tsar. But it is highly probable that the roots this activity are to be found in Russian teachings and writings. is important to observe that from the start there seems to have been distinction between Muslim and Tatar; they were synonymous, least in the Volga area. And it was not a matter of language, since ousands of Tatars, for example, lived and still live in Moscow, eaking Russian and knowing no Tatar. Yet they call themselves uslims or Tatars, not Russians.

There is a phase in the internal history of the Volga area which serves attention and that is the missionary activity of Russian hristians among the Muslims. After the conquest of Kazan there was rather strong attempt, over a period of several years, not concerted ut still an attempt, to convert the Tatars to Christianity. It was only t the time of Catherine the Great, when she issued the famous *ukaz* hich made the Tatar nobles the equivalent of Russian nobility and so another decree which gave them freedom from forced conversion, at there occurred a real change in the situation on the Volga. The arist government, however, did not cease to believe that the Chris- anization of the Tatars was to the advantage of Russia, and the

missionaries were actively supported. But to try to trace the hist of this missionary activity in the Volga area is confusing because the clouded issues involved.

The missionaries had a great advantage over the local mulla for the vernacular Tatar language was used as the vehicle to conv the Muslims while the mullahs continued to use Arabic as their me of religious expression. It was a distinguished Russian oriental Ilminsky, who was the first to become practically very much interes in Islam and who seemed at first to be anti-missionary and p Muslim. Later, however, he became a cultural missionary and found a native school in Kazan. He was one of the leaders in an attempt make Tatar a literary language for missionary purposes. Thus the of native languages by the Soviets has an old precedent. Howev when one reads about Ilminsky's work on the Volga one finds t his aim was not to convert Tatars to Christianity directly, but to ma priests out of some of them and let them go and convert their o people in their own language. One complaint of the Muslims of Volga was that the Tatar priests of the Ilminsky Academy in Kaz were accompanied by policemen when they came into the villages. Th is no question that there was great discrimination against the Musli seeking any offices before the First World War (*de facto*, not *de ju* The whole history of the use of the vernacular Tatar language as vehicle of spreading Christianity against the conservative Arabic Isl shows the importance of this policy at the end of the nineteen century. Professor V. Rosen, eminent Arabist of St. Petersburg, posed the use of the Tatar vernacular in Kazan, declaring not that would help convert Muslims to Christianity, but rather that it wou corrupt and even end the use of Arabic. In this the orientalist and t mullahs were at one, which course of action, however, would probab have meant the decline and fall of Islam on the Volga.

Thus the issues were not clear, but clouded and intermingled. Ev in the Tsarist time one finds Tatars who seemingly supported t Russification of their own people and also Russians who support the maintenance of Tatar learning, at least in the traditional for with some Russians perhaps even supporting the use of the vernacul as the vehicle of expression. Nonetheless, the Tsarist government d support the active conversion of Tatars to Christianity. A scholar missionary journal *(Mir Islama)* published before the Revolutio edited by the eminent orientalist V. Barthold, had a counterpart the United States, *The Moslem World*. The basic purpose of both jou nals was to convert Muslims to Christianity and Professor Bartho

lly ended the journal, which he had kept mainly for scholarly poses, saying he could not even get decent Arabic type to print sical texts.

It was the embryonic pan-Turanists such as Gasprinsky (Gaspirali), Yusuf Akchura, and others who woke to the dangers facing Mus- in Russia. In order to preserve their identity, cultural and reli- us more than political, it was necessary to have a program which uld bring all Turkish peoples and Muslims of the Tsarist empire ether. In this program they were supported by the Ottoman Turks, ecially after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

The Tsarist government, of course, did not conceal its unhappiness uch developments, and many Tatars fled to the Ottoman Empire. the Muslims continued to discuss problems and to organize into ious groups, frankly nationalistic, if one may use that word at that e. The First World War, with the Kazakh revolt and its suppression 1916, as well as other events, served to further separate the Muslims m the Russians. Then came the Revolution, and many thought the llennium, or at least freedom, was at hand.

I do not wish to discuss the history of the Revolution and its after- th, including the founding of the various Soviet republics, the pan- rkish Congress of Baku, the Basmatchis in Central Asia, and the e, for this is part of the background of the present scene. Rather I ll only discuss several general, yet I feel important, points in regard Islam in the USSR.

The Soviets were faced with a double danger from these non- ssian minorities, perhaps best characterized by an Arabic word made nous by Ibn Khaldun, the sociologist of the fourteenth century. It *'asabiyya* which can best be translated as "emotional solidarity com- x." Here, the *'asabiyya* had become two-fold, as a result of the ivities of the "pan-Turanists" of the pre-Revolutionary period. One s pan-Islam, the other pan-Turan. The international dangers of such vements to the Soviet state were obvious. But also inside the USSR would be unwise for the Tatars of the Volga, the Crimea, Turks of erbaidzhan and Turks of Central Asia to feel their common heritage d culture as Turks and Muslims. The *'asabiyya* of all these people d to be first broken then changed to the new *'asabiyya* of the cul- e and religion of Soviet man. The Uzbek or Tatar should not say was a Turk by language and culture and a Muslim by religion, her he had to learn that he was a Soviet man by culture and religion, d eventually Russian by language. How to accomplish this goal? An

all-out attack on Turan and Islam was unwise, especially as tasks
where took most of the time and energy of the new Soviet s
Everything had to be planned. First the immediate danger of the
matchi with Enver Pasha, and such people, in other words Turan,
to be eliminated. Then, after several generations Islam would atro
and perish by itself. The task was to convince the Uzbek that he
an Uzbek and not a Turk, the Kazakh that he was a Kazakh and n
Turk. So the various republics, areas, and the like, were created. *Di*
et impera is nothing new under the sun. Islam, however, could
killed through the children. There was no need to attack Islam ex
to ridicule it and to pass certain laws which took away much o
effectiveness. In the long run it would fall of its own accord. This
the strategy of the Soviets.

To help achieve this end, the history of Islam was re-written
Marxist lines and Islam and Muslims were relegated to the backw
bourgeois past. One might dispute whether Muhammad lived i
slave or in a feudal society, otherwise the pattern was clear and fi
and in the inexhorable course of time everyone would become a So
man anyway, just as surely as the sun would rise tomorrow.

Muslims in the Soviet Union

Richard Pipes

My remarks are designed to implement Professor Frye's. Professor
ye, being an orientalist, looked at the problems of Soviet Muslims
m the orientalist's point of view; I, in turn, would like to look at
m from the point of view of the Russian historian.

To begin with, I must note with regret that the Muslim problem
Russia and its successor state, the Soviet Union, has not been ade-
ately studied. Russian historians have been singularly neglectful in
ling with the nationality problems in the Russian state. There are
ny reasons for this, probably the principal one being the lack of
lization in Russia of the fact that the Russian state was and con-
ues to be an empire, in many respects comparable to the great
stern ones. This lack of realization is largely the result of a geo-
phic accident, namely, that the colonial possessions of the Russian
te are contiguous to the metropolis instead of being separated from it
is the case with all the other great empires. Thus the Russians tend to
nsider their expansion into these areas a part of the growth of the
ssian national state. Even as late as 1917, when the empire col-
sed, most Russians did not know, and many would have vehemently
nied, that they were in any sense a great imperial power. Of course,
y were.

The census of 1897, the only census taken before the Revolution,
owed that the Great Russian population was actually a minority in
Russian empire. The majority of the population consisted of so-
led minorities. In this category the Muslims occupied a prominent
ce. In the census of 1897 they constituted approximately 13 to 14
cent of the total population. Nearly 13 per cent was the proportion
vealed by the first complete Soviet census in 1926. The census con-
cted last year (1959) shows a slight drop in the percentage of the
uslim population. According to it there are between 24 and 25 mil-
n Muslims in the USSR. We cannot know the exact number because
census is not a religious but a national one, and certain national
oups, such as the Ossetins, for instance, are partly Muslim and partly
ristian. But the figure is somewhere around 24 or 25 million, which
nstitutes nearly 12 per cent of the total population of the Soviet
ion. (The decline is due partly to the mass slaughter of certain

Muslim groups in the nineteen-thirties, such as the Kazakhs, and pa
to the higher rate of growth of some other ethnic groups.) The o
whelming majority of Soviet Muslims consists of Turks. It comes
surprise to most people to learn that there are more Turks in the So
Union than there are in Turkey. There are also more Muslims th
I believe, than in the United Arab Republic. Most of these Turks
Professor Frye has mentioned, are Sunni. The Azeri Turks are the
important major Shiite group. Sunnis, I take it, are regarded as
more "orthodox" of the two. An outsider, however, may do well
to attach too much significance to such vague concepts, mindful of
deputation by an English bishop of the eighteenth century, who
that orthodoxy "is my doxy" while heterodoxy is "another m
doxy."

These Turks and the non-Turkish Muslim groups, consisting la
ly of Iranians (the Tadzhiks and certain Caucasian nationalities), c
under Russian rule in a succession of conquests which began in
middle of the sixteenth century with the acquisition by Russia of
Kazan Khanate and the Volga region and the subjection of the Ba
kirs, followed in the first half of the nineteenth century with the c
quest of the Caucasus, and completed in the middle of the ninetee
century with the conquest of Turkestan. Unfortunately, I have
the time to analyse the policy of the Russian government toward th
Muslim minorities. In very general terms the Russian policy tow
the Muslim minorities, as toward practically all the other minorit
the Jews and Ukrainians excepted, may be described as a traditio
imperial policy. The government was interested in a given popula
and in its area from the point of view of the economic and strate
benefits which it could derive from them. It was not interested, on
whole, in their cultural life. I say "on the whole" because again,
Professor Frye has mentioned, there were periods in Russian hist
when the government made conscious, deliberate, and intensive effo
to convert the population to Christianity, but for all practical purpo
these efforts stopped at the end of the eighteenth century with
reign of Catherine the Great. In the nineteenth century and the ea
twentieth century the Tsarist government was not much interes
either in conversion or in the cultural affairs of these minorities.
Muslims had their own schools, and particularly after Gasprinsky
started his innovations, a large network of so-called *djadidist*
formed) schools was established. Like the other minorities they had th
own newspapers, their own associations, their own political parti
they participated in the elections to the Russian parliament *(Dur*

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had their own caucus there. In other words, they enjoyed the
efits and paid the price of being a subject people of a traditional
nial power. This situation changed drastically with the Revolution.

The Communist regime is of course not a traditional power. It is
nething quite new and it would be misleading to draw a direct line
continuity between imperial Russia and the modern Communist
ime. Certainly there are certain continuities due to geographic loca-
n and the inheritance of certain common strategic and geopolitical
blems. There are also continuities stemming simply from national
chology and tradition but, by and large, in terms of outlook on life
l in terms of policy, the differences are abysmal, enormous and,
bridgeable. This is very clearly evident in the change of policy
ward Islam.

The Communist regime from its advent to power has had a very
finite and specific attitude toward the minorities, and a series of
licies which, while subject to minor tactical adjustments, have not
entially varied for the past forty years. I don't need to explain, of
rse, that the attitude of the Communist regime toward Islam as a
ligion is a highly negative one. That goes without saying. What is of
erest, however, is Soviet policy toward the Muslim population. This
rather subtle and requires some explanation.

The Soviet government in its policy toward Islam in the early
riod, that is in the early twenties when the policy was being crys-
llized, was torn by two opposite pulls. On the one hand, the govern-
nt was very much afraid of pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian move-
nts. I think, in retrospect, it was unnecessarily worried about them.
y own impression is that neither pan-Islamism nor pan-Turanianism
nk very deep roots in the consciousness of the Muslim population in
ssia before the Revolution or in the first years of the Revolution.
e Muslim elite, small to begin with, was split into several groups.
part of it was profoundly religious and orthodox, some of it was
cialist, and some of it was given to local patriotism. Only a very
nall proportion could be considered pan-Islamic and pan-Turanian.
evertheless, the government was worried, and there is evidence to
ow that Lenin in particular attached great importance to these move-
nts. This consideration necessitated a tough policy toward the Mus-
ns, a policy of destroying religious institutions, of cutting off contact
tween the Muslims and their co-religionists abroad, and of breaking
the Muslim community into the maximum number of small entities.

On the other hand, however, the Soviet government had to deal
ry carefully with the Muslim population. This was due to two tac-

tics: 1) Not only communism but even socialism had practicall roots in the Muslim community. It was necessary to win confi and to establish some sort of stability in these areas, and this inv concessions; 2) The Soviet government was most anxious to wi sympathies of the Muslims outside the Soviet Union. This emp on Islam as a world-wide revolutionary base was related to the gra disillusionment of the Soviet leadership with the chances of a re tion in Western Europe. When Lenin made the Revolution in 191 was convinced this was simply the snapping of the weakest link i capitalist chain, and that his action would immediately engender r lutions in Western Europe. But these revolutions did not occur, an 1920—21 Lenin realized that one could not count on the Western letariat. As a result two things happened; first of all a shift of phasis on building up Soviet Russia as a fortress of world-wide c munism, and, in the second place, a flanking movement against w capitalism through an attack on its colonial possessions. Lenin, I th quite erroneously (but he was not the only one who made this er believed that the Western powers could not subsist if the colonies w taken away from them. He therefore felt that one must tackle colonial possessions of the West, particularly in Asia, and that course entailed active Soviet propaganda in the Muslim regions. necessitated a soft policy toward the Muslims, with concessions signed to win their sympathies.

It is these contrary pulls—the desire, on the one hand, to put domestic Muslims in their place, to prevent them from merging feeling any bonds of sympathy among themselves or with their religionists abroad, and, on the other hand, the interests of the gov ment in spreading communism among the Muslims abroad — t explain some of the vacillations of Soviet policy towards the Musli in the early twenties and to some extent since.

The pan-Islamic danger, as I have said, appears in retrospec phantom one. But there was a real danger in a Muslim movement t drew logical conclusions from the Communist admission that the f of world revolution depended on the Eastern peoples. Such conclusi were drawn by an original young Volga Tatar, Sultan Galiev, wh ideas deserve to be better known.

Sultan Galiev, a protege of Stalin and subsequently also his vict evolved in the early nineteen-twenties a theory which held that real conflict in the world was not between socialist countries and ca talist countries but between industrial societies and backward societi He argued that in the long run the interests of all the industrial soc

whether they be capitalist or socialist, were common. Therefore backward societies, and he had particularly in mind the Muslims, ld with time be just as much betrayed and persecuted by the Com- ist Russians as they had been by the capitalist Westerners. Sultan ev urged the creation of what he called a Colonial International h would unite all the backward nations of the world and stand up nst the Communist Russians as well as against the English, French, all the other Western powers. Needless to say, this earned him an lsion from the Party, arrest and then release, which ended finally he nineteen-thirties in death in a Soviet concentration camp. I k that his name is not even mentioned in the Soviet Union today. ideas were a real danger, much more so than pan-Islamism. They cate some of the difficulties the Soviet regime had and still has in otiating the very rocky waters of foreign policy in the Muslim ss.

What are the principal lines of Soviet policy toward the Muslims hey have been worked out since the early nineteen-twenties? First ll, in its effort to break up pan-Islamic tendencies, the Soviet gov- ment destroyed as much as it could the bonds linking the various mic populations of Russia to each other. That meant, among other ngs, breaking up the population into a large number of so-called ionalities. I say "so-called" because the Russians in some cases had create synthetic nationalities where there had been only tribal ups. We now have in the Soviet Union a dozen or so major, and ny minor, Muslim "nationalities." This policy involved, among er things, the suppression of the group which was most active in ating a sense of unity among the Muslims of the Soviet Union, the lga Tatar group, which has been and still is clearly singled out for cial cultural discrimination. It also meant a very active anti-reli- us policy. This policy did not go into effect until approximately 28—1930. In the first ten years after the Revolution the Muslims ld enjoy practically unlimited religious freedom. In 1928, with the e of Stalin to power and the initiation of the five-year plans, the llahs were arrested, mosques were either destroyed or transformed o warehouses or clubs, and the whole religious establishment demol- ed. This, in fact, has been true ever since. Some concessions have en made recently but they have been made largely for foreign con- mption, that is, for the consumption of Muslims outside the Soviet ion. I can recall, three years ago, when I was in Tashkent and ited the mufti, I was given a Koran which had just been printed. It s, I believe, the first Koran printed in the Soviet Union. It was taken

from a stack of neatly wrapped and arranged books obviously pre to be handed out to foreign visitors. Limited pilgrimages to Mecca also been allowed.

The most radical, and the most absurd, of all the anti-Mu moves, was the change in the alphabet. In 1928 and 1929 the S government put through a reform of the alphabet used by the Mu population. The Muslims were no longer allowed to keep the A alphabet which all of them had used, and were forced instead to stitute a modified Latin alphabet. A similar move, of course, carried out in Turkey at the same time. There were certain philolo reasons for this. I am told by orientalists that the Arabic alphabet not lend itself well to the rendition of the Turkic sounds. The in esting thing is, however, that not only was Arabic replaced by L but that each of these synthetic national groups had to have its alphabet, so that certain vowels and certain consonants which pronounced in a certain way in a given locality were given a sepa sound symbol. This reform was repeated again in 1939 when all o Muslim nationalities had to abandon the Latin alphabet, and to ac instead the Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet. This alphabet is still in today. The Soviet Muslims, as far as I know, are the only Mu population in the world that is not allowed to write in the A alphabet but has to use the alphabet of the conquering nation. T are today in the Soviet Union numerous Muslim alphabets, th Cyrillic alphabets with a few modified letters to render the sound a given area. This means in effect, that the Muslim youth today is off from his Muslim heritage. He cannot read, presumably, books v ten before the Revolution or Muslim religious writings which ca found at home or in libraries. By means of the Cyrillic alphabet Russians also managed to smuggle a great number of Russian wo into the local vocabularies. This is perhaps the grossest, in a sense, crudest, the least reasonable of all attempts of Russification.

I need not, of course, elaborate on the absence of political self-r The Muslim areas have no more or no less self-rule than the other a in the Soviet Union or under Soviet control. I must say in all just however, that not all things are black in the status of the Soviet M lims. Racial equality, whose absence is perhaps the principal sourc friction in other colonial areas, is fairly much a fact in the So Union. You will find natural animosities, and even very intense o but I think you will not find a color bar, nor will you find serious racial discrimination. True, Russians are often given prefer tial status, but this is not due to racial prejudice. This policy, on

ple, is in the Russian tradition. It is not a particularly Soviet inno- tion. A particularly Soviet innovation, however, is the opening up normous educational opportunities. There is no doubt that prob- y in no Muslim area in the world are the opportunities for obtaining chnical education as good as they are in the Muslim areas in the iet Union.

I do not want to leave unmentioned the policy of population de- tations. This is not practiced today but it was practiced under Sta- Immediately after the end of the Second World War between a lion and a million and a half Muslims were deported from certain derlands in or near the war zone to Central Asia and Siberia, either ause they had collaborated with the Germans, or because they were pected of having collaborated, or because they were suspected of ving wanted to collaborate. Some of these people have since then n allowed to come back.

I wish I had time to go into the reactions of the Muslim population various Soviet measures. They are interesting. I have conducted a mber of interviews with refugees from these areas, and have been lowing the Soviet publications on this subject, but I cannot elaborate lack of time. All I can offer are some broad conclusions.

In the first place, I don't believe that large scale assimilation has en place. In other words, I doubt whether these efforts at assimilating population through linguistic and alphabet manipulations, through ssification in schools, through the whole vast apparatus of the prop- anda machine, have succeeded. There are various bits of evidence indicate this. The latest, however, is that provided by the Soviet nsus of last year (1959) which rather pleased me because it con- med my own expectations. It indicated that linguistically the Muslim pulation of the Soviet Union not only is not becoming denation- zed but is in fact becoming more nationally cohesive. This is indi- ted by statistics contained in the Soviet census indicating how many mbers of a given nationality no longer speak their own language. would like to quote to you the figures for the three major Muslim oups, the Uzbeks, the Tatars, and the Kazakhs. The census showed at only 1.6 per cent of the Uzbeks do not speak Uzbek but speak me other language. Compared with the census of 1926 this figure ows a diminution, for in 1926 the number of Uzbeks speaking lan- ages other than their own was 2 per cent. For the Tatars the corre- onding figure for 1959 is 8 per cent, and for 1926, 10 per cent. For e Kazakhs the figures are 1.6 per cent in 1959 and 2.5 per cent in 926. Of course, language is not the only criterion of national identity,

but it is one of the best, and it is significant that in this respec
Muslim community is not losing its identity.

My impression (based on various kinds of evidence) is that v
is happening in the borderlands inhabited by the Muslims is the e
gence of two self-contained communities: a Russian (western) c
munity and a Muslim community. The two work together, live
gether side by side, but they do not mix, do not intermarry, and
quite separate existences. I also believe that the total effect of So
anti-religious measures has been not so much to wipe out religio
to modernize it. The result is similar to that which has taken plac
the West during the last two hundred years: a separation of relig
from secular life. Islam in the Muslim borderlands plays more or
the same role which Christianity does in the West today. There
clearly defined religious sphere which does not, on the whole, ove
into the secular one. My impression is that this is happening,
would have happened anyway, because it is a natural, modern proc
but the Soviets have accelerated it. In effect, therefore, what you h
is the creation of modern nationalities imbued with a modern, secu
natural self-consciousness, and with a modern population, includi
relatively large technically trained intelligentsia, and presumably (I
"presumably" because the evidence is only very circumstantial) v
an outlook and pathos peculiar to modern nationalism.

Recent Developments in Soviet Eastern Republics

Garip Sultan

Initial Steps Toward Liberalization

There have been certain changes in Khrushchev's policy toward the
slim peoples of the USSR. They took place in the period between
Twentieth and the Twenty-First Party congresses (1956-59) and
manifested themselves in two ways: 1) the political and cultural
of the eastern republics in Soviet foreign policy has become
ater, particularly in the countries of Asia and Africa; 2) people
nging to Central Asian nationalities are being advanced to very
posts in the Party, the government, and in other institutions.
was not true during the Stalin era.

In the 29 years of Stalin's rule of the Communist Party, from the
teenth Party Congress in 1924 until his death in 1953, there were
ually no Muslim Communists in the central organs. Up to the
enteenth Party Congress in 1934, there was not one Muslim Com-
nist among the members of the Central Committee, let alone in the
itburo or the Secretariat. Only at the Seventeenth Party Congress
one Uzbek, Ikramov, become a member of the Central Committee.
the Eighteenth Party Congress in 1939 two Muslims, an Uzbek,
upov, and an Azerbaidzhani, Bagirov, became members of the
tral Committee. Numerically, the situation improved at the Nine-
nth Party Congress in 1952 when, out of consideration for the
ionalism which had become manifest during the Second World War,
Muslims were made members of the Central Committee. However,
spite of the quantitative increase of Muslim membership not one
slim was elected to the Presidium or the Secretariat.

Only after Stalin's death in 1953, was first secretary of the
tral Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaidzhan, Bagirov,
de a candidate member of the Presidium, and even this was at the
est of Beria who wanted to win the sympathy of the Islamic peoples
the struggle for power which had then begun in the Kremlin. At
Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev included his own
stern man," Nuruddin Mukhutdinov, an Uzbek, as a candidate mem-
of the Presidium, to replace Bagirov who had been eliminated in
nection with the Beria case. At the Twenty-First Congress in 1959,
khutdinov became a member of the Presidium and the Secretariat.
is was the first time that a Muslim Communist was ever granted

so high a place in the Party hierarchy. From that time on, Mu dinov's name has often appeared as a member or the head of go ment delegations to Asian and African countries. He also hold post of chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Sovi Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. At the Thirt Komsomol Congress in 1958, for the first time, two representa of Islamic Central Asia, became members of the Komsomol Ce Committee Buro. They were Kendzhabayev, a Kazakh, and Murtaz an Uzbek.

While Muslim Communists are being promoted to higher posi within the Soviet Union, Muslims specializing in literary, social, scientific work are also being noticeably used for foreign propag carried out in the countries of Asia and Africa. Communist ide terms of scholarship are delivered to the countries of the East thr the Tadzhik historian Gafurov who is director of the Institut Eastern Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. At the of the Soviet Committee for the Solidarity of Asian Countries tablished by the Soviet government for the purposes of political p ganda, is the Tadzhik writer Tursun-Zade, who also headed the S delegation consisting entirely of representatives from Soviet ea republics at the Second Conference for the Solidarity of the Cou of Asia and Africa in Conakry in April 1960. Writers from Turke Tataria, and Azerbaidzhan were prominent at the Conference of W ers of Asian and African Countries held in Tashkent in 1958, w gave rise to the so-called "spirit of Tashkent," which in turn op up broader possibilities for Soviet influence over Oriental lite circles. Eastern Soviet writers now meet their Arab, Pakistani, Indonesian colleagues more often than previously.

Uzbek, Kazakh, Tatar, Turkmen, and Azerbaidzhani literary w are being translated into Arabic, Persian, Hindi, and Urdu. secondary schools in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Kazan (Tatars are now offering instruction in Arabic. Chinese has become a requ course at the Kazakh State University in Alma-Ata.

One now reads quite frequently of song or dance groups of eas origin, particularly from Uzbekistan, Kirgizia, Bashkiria, or Azer dzhan, appearing in Cairo, Delhi, Rangoon, and other large citie Africa and in Asia. Trade-union, youth, and writers' delegations invited from various Asian countries, on the other hand, to visit Central Asian republics, where they are shown the "economic cultural achievement of peoples formerly backward and oppressed Tsarism."

The Muslims of the Soviet Union are no longer isolated as they during the time of Stalin, but what has prompted Khrushchev to these changes? The evidence available in Soviet sources leads to believe that certain internal questions of a political nature the plans the Party has for the East are both important factors the recent decrease in the isolation of the Muslim peoples of the

Internal Aspects

Two factors which have forced Khrushchev to direct more of his ntion to the Muslim peoples in his internal policies are the in- sed importance to the Soviet economy of the Muslim territories the nationalism which is a product thereof. Important oil resources located in the Tatar ASSR, the Bashkir ASSR and Azerbaidzhan. mical industry is also widely developed in these areas. The major on producing area in the USSR is Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan is a n and industrial center. Central Asia is also considered a major le-breeding area. During the so-called period of "socialist recon- ction," initiated by Stalin, the natural resources of these territories e widely developed. In Khrushchev's economic plan for the period "comprehensive construction of Communism" the eastern republics in hold a significant place.

Along with the industrialization of the Muslim territories, the tural level of the population has also been raised. A whole new, ive working class of skilled workers has arisen. Qualified engineers, hnicians and administrative personnel, as well as scientists, writers, mposers and artists have emerged. The Muslim peoples have now tured and are fully capable of self-government. The feeling of kwardness has been replaced with national dignity. Local intel- tuals are no longer willing to allow Moscow to assume the tradi- nal role of a metropolis of a colonial period, even though this policy now followed in the name of "proletarian internationalism" and the nity of socialist society."

The nationalism born under these circumstances is the second tor with which Khrushchev has had to reckon. Muslim nationalism k on various forms during the Second World War and thereafter d could no longer be ignored. The Twentieth Party Congress was e turning point. In comparison with Soviet nationality policy under alin, based on brutal power verging on genocide, Khrushchev ieved something of a "thaw," a "thaw" ideologically explained as return to the nationality policies of Leninism." In his report to e Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev did not speak of the "im-

portant role of the Great Russian people," the theme of previous congresses, but gave first priority to the question of strengthe friendship among "all the peoples of the USSR." From the text evident that an improvement in the relations between Russians non-Russians was intended. Khrushchev cited Lenin to the effect "only enormous attention to the interests of the various nationa will remove the sources of conflict and mutual distrust . . ." An warned the Russian Communists that "petty patronage must n tolerated in the relationships with the union republics." He also them not to scorn national peculiarities and differences, but to con these "the most interesting form of all their practical work in lea economic and cultural constructions." Khrushchev admitted that takes had been permitted in nationality policy, mistakes which now in need of "serious correction." He explained the need for "serious correction" by saying that earlier, when "there had been specialists in the provinces . . . almost every enterprise was man by a union ministry [i. e. was fully in the hands of Russians sent from Moscow]. Today the situation has changed—as industry grown in every republic, trained and experienced non-Russian ca have also grown, and the general cultural level of all the peoples o USSR has risen sharply."

The erstwhile violation of the rights of the non-Russian natio ties was blamed on "Stalin's personality cult." Khrushchev and lieutenants condemned the wholesale deportation in 1944 of ce Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus: the Balkars, the Chechen-In and the Karachais. In January 1957 the USSR Supreme Soviet pass law returning these national minorities to their former territories restoring their autonomy. Only the Crimean Tatars, who had been deported, were not given the right to return to the Crimea w had since been incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR.

Reforms were also introduced in other walks of life, and affor some relief to the Muslim peoples. In historiography, for insta historians began devoting greater attention to national libera movements under Tsarism. The late Soviet historian, Anna Pankrat presumably with Khrushchev's consent, decried in her speech at Twentieth Party Congress the adverse effect that the "personality c had had in causing Soviet historians to describe historical figure ethnic minorities as "reactionaries" and "agents of foreign powe While this did not cause the abandonment of the thesis that the nexation of non-Russian peoples to Russia was good, it changed atmosphere of scholarship. Thus, during the meetings of the US

demy of Sciences, held in the summer of 1957 on the subject of quadricentennial of the "voluntary annexation of Bashkiria to ia," Bashkir historians were able to maintain that there were no rical documents on hand to prove that this act was actually ntary and that one had to rely, therefore, on secondary sources. ritcism of the "Stalin personality cult" was the first step toward bilitation of Party and state officials, writers, scientists, and artists had been liquidated or persecuted during the Stalin period for "bourgeois nationalism." Among those rehabilitated were Fitrat, ell-known Uzbek writer and professor of philology, Gazi Yunus, riter and dramatist, Professor Abdurakhman Saadi, Galimiadzhan gimov, a Tatar classic author, Tinchurin, a well-known dramatist, Afsal Tahir, former chairman of the Executive Committee of kiria, and other persons who during the twenties and thirties had ed an important part in the cultural development of the Muslim ons.

Kazakh, Uzbek, and Tatar writers have begun to study the influ- s the various Turkic literatures have had upon each other, and the ificance of the eastern classics in their formation. During the od of Stalinism, this question was viewed only in the light of "progressive influence of Russian literature" and the "reactionary uence of the literatures of the Muslim East." Linguists have placed the agenda the question of standardizing the orthography of the kic languages in which differences had arisen as a result of Stalin's paign against the linguistic and cultural unity of the Muslim ons which culminated in the introduction of the Russian alphabet. mmissions for the Standardization of the Orthography of the kic Languages" have been established by the councils of ministers the republics of Central Asia and of Tatarstan. Some concessions e also made in the representation of the eastern republics in the iet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Khrushchev parently permitted these various concessions in the hope of harness- the growing nationalism of the Muslim peoples to loyalty toward "common Soviet state." In substance, however, the Party's nation- y policy toward the eastern nations was not changed. This became vious upon the implementation of the policies charted at the Twenty- t Party Congress.

Ideological Offensive

In regard to ideology, Turkestan is considered "the experimental a of communism" and of Soviet interests in the East. The Soviet lers regard their eastern republics as material and psychological

bases for the future Sovietization of the countries of Asia and
The nationality and colonial question, and its exploitation to
about the "revolution of the proletariat," is basic to Leninism
circular letter to Soviet deputies and Party organizations, dated
ary 12, 1919, Stalin wrote: "By its geographic location, Turke
the bridge which connects socialist Russia with the enslaved n
of the East." Now, in the light of the awakening of the e
nations, the Party thinks that the time has come to expand t
ploitation of the national liberation struggle of the nations o
and Africa.

At the Twentieth and Twenty-First congresses a "peaceful
munist offensive" was announced. Khrushchev defined the obj
of this "peaceful offensive" as follows: *The backward countries o
and Africa are to go over to socialism, by-passing the capitalistic
of development, as in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.*

The final objective of the "peaceful offensive of Communism"
defined by the Soviet academician, Mints, at the scientific confe
dedicated to the "unification of Central Asia with Russia," which
place in Tashkent in May 1959. His definition was as follows: 1
cialist construction in Central Asia will be repeated in the revolu
ary struggle of the nations in Asia and Africa; 2) Only soci
ensures the economic and political independence of the once back
colonial nations; 3) As is evident from the experience with the C
Asian republics, the backward nations by-passing capitalism nee
aid of the "victorious proletariat of the progressive nations" in
transition to socialism.

Retroaction

How does "communism" in the eastern republics look in the
of national policy after the Twenty-First Congress of the Comm
Party of the Soviet Union? At that congress a "period of expa
construction of communism" was announced. As regards the nati
ity question, the thesis was advanced to bring about "the spir
rapprochement of nations and to prepare the necessary precondi
for the merging of nations in the future world Communist soci
The period of the "political thaw" of nationalities came to an
The creation of the sovnarkhozes (economic councils) did not intro
any significant changes into the economic rights of the eastern repu
For example, there are nine sovnarkhozes in Kazakhstan, but eigh
them are headed by officials sent from Moscow. A similar situa
exists in another important economic organ in the republics, the Gos

concerning local personnel, an article in the Party journal *Kom-*
(No. 13, 1959) stated: "One must not select personnel solely
basis of nationality, without considering political qualities."
ing with this principle, Khrushchev reshuffled the Party apparatus
kestan in 1959. Babayev, the First Secretary of the Turkmen
, was relieved of his duties, because he, in violation of directives
Moscow, raised the proportion of Turkmen employed in the
lic's government agencies to 70 per cent. Kamalov, first secretary
e Uzbek Party, and Mirzakhmetov, chairman of the Uzbek Council
inisters, were removed for the same reasons.

A basic rule in the Muslims republics is that when the post of
secretary is occupied by a local Communist, a representative of
cow, usually a Russian, holds the post of second secretary. Before
exceptional appointment of the Kazakh Kunayev in 1960, the
khstan Party organization had always been headed by Russian
munists. The chairmen of the State Security Committee are also
ally always representatives of Moscow.

The Russian language is also becoming officially more dominant.
ian is taught in schools beginning with the second grade. The
of December 24, 1958, "To strengthen the tie of the school with
and to develop further the system of public education," made it
longer obligatory but voluntary to teach children their native
uage. Practical conditions make it necessary for local cadres to
w Russian if they wish to get good jobs. Therefore some parents
l their children to Russian-language schools. In Kazakhstan, for
nple, 25 per cent of the Kazakh students attend Russian schools.

In the eastern republics the Party is now following a policy of
ing the native population into national minorities by importing
ians and Ukrainians. In Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs compose only
er cent of the total population.

The "Communist experiment" in the eastern republics has thus not
ranteed economic and political independence, but, on the contrary,
established a new form of colonial subjugation of smaller peoples.

Summary of the Discussion

The chairman of the session, Professor Tibor Halaši-Kun, o the discussion period by inviting questions. The first questio addressed to Professor Richard Frye and concerned the relations the Tadzhik language to Persian.

Professor Frye stated it depended on which orientalist in the Union is queried on whether the Tadzhik language is any di from Persian. Nevertheless, the Soviet claim that Tadzhik is a se language seems to have died down in recent years. Persian bo Arabic characters are being printed in Stalinabad, and some Ta books are printed in Arabic characters and read like Persian alt they are officially in Tadzhik. The question is where a language and a dialect begins. Tadzhiki is very close to the Persian spok Kabul, Afghanistan. Gilbert Lazard, who is now professor of P at the Sorbonne, claims that there are actually three languages, j the Soviets seem to do: Tadzhiki, Kabuli, and Persian. The probl thus not only a scholarly one but is also nationalistic, and has c a great deal of confusion. It is true that there are certain Tadzhik lects which are completely unintelligible to any Persian and one therefore say, theoretically, that they are different languages. pends on scholarly views on the subject. However, it is doubtful the Soviet government is very much concerned with these pro and it most probably does not attempt to consult specialists of Ir philology regarding them. Professor Frye then asked Professor Ri Pipes to comment on this question from the point of view of S policy.

Professor Pipes thought the question was part of a larger S policy to claim an autochthonous status for each of the larger nati ities of the Soviet Union. Russian culture is being depicted as au thonous, and independent of Byzantine, Western, and Asian influ The Turkic and the Tadzhik cultures are similarly being separated their common Islamic, Turkish, and Iranian heritage. This, of co is being done to fight pan-Islamic and pan-Iranian tendencies v the Soviets fear. The policy is not accidental, or, as the Soviets w say, using their favorite Russian term, *ne sluchaino*.

The next question concerned the significance of the Congress o Peoples of the East in Baku in September 1920. Professor Pipes rep

ng that the Congress constituted an effort on the part of the Third national to assemble the representatives of all the Eastern nations. ckfired slightly because Enver Pasha made an unexpected ap- ance and was enormously applauded while Zinoviev, chairman of Third International, was ignored. This, of course, made Zinoviev angry. While the Baku Congress did not have much success, it the first public effort by the Soviet government to rally the peoples e East under its flag.

The discussion then turned to the question of the growth of unity ng the Turkic peoples in the USSR. Professor Pipes opined that he not noticed any trends which would strengthen unity. One may be ed by a very natural difference which exists in Soviet society be- n what is printed and "official" and what people really think and among themselves. If a Soviet orientalist honestly admits (as he to the questioner) that a particular local culture is really part of a r whole, this does not reflect a change in official policy. The Party is not necessarily followed in private conversations.

Professor Halaši-Kun challenged any growth of unity among the ic peoples on linguistic grounds. The Turks who live in the Soviet on are, in general, either Kipchak Turks or Turki Turks. It is pos- to create linguistic unity among the Kipchak Turks which means bringing together of Kazan Turks, Bashkirs, Balkars, Crimean s, and the various Turkic groups which once lived in the Caucasus. a real Uzbek would not be able linguistically to understand a an Turk and vice versa. The Azerbaidzhanis, moreover, belong to ird group which includes the Turks of Turkey. Then in the Altai Sayan Mountains there are several smaller groups of people that ther form a fourth group. And, finally, there are independent ps whose Turkic background is less known, such as the Yakuts Chuvash. To bring all these various groups together, at least ac- ing to the Turkologists, is nothing short of a pleasant dream.

The next question concerned Russification. According to Professor s, the policy of active Russification, which means the identification he Soviet state and the Communist Party with the Great Russian e, did not begin until the early nineteen-thirties. Prior to that, iet Russia was still a multinational state where all languages were rded, theoretically, as equal. In the nineteen-twenties the Party rded Great Russian chauvinism as the principal danger to its cies. In the thirties, however, minority nationalism became the t danger. By 1939 Stalin was entirely dependent on Great Russian onalism to carry him through the Second World War. The subject

also brought up the question of the absence of a racial proble color line in Russia. Professor Pipes advanced a hypothesis subject, which he considered rather tentative. According to him are two kinds of cultures. Some are centripetal and self-con Other cultures are centrifugal and absorptive. The latter tend to foreign influences and to create and develop them within the ethos. Russian culture seems very clearly to belong to this category. Throughout their history the Russians have shown rema affinity for other cultures and ethnic groups. From the moment they entered their present territory, between the seventh and centuries C. E., they have been in contact with a great vari races, the Turks, the Iranians, Finns, Balts, and others with they have freely intermarried. Thus, partly through intermarria partly through continuous contact, the Russians have develo receptivity to other cultures and a certain amount of racial tole This, of course, does not mean that the Russians are distinguish some very peculiar "universality" as was claimed by Dostoyevs

The next subject for discussion was the change in the alp used by the Turkic peoples in the USSR. According to Professor the abandonment of the Arabic alphabet could have been ju somewhat on philological grounds. The decision to introduc Cyrillic alphabet, on the other hand, was purely political in its vation—it was due to an effort to Russify the Muslims by a g introduction of Russian words into the teaching of local lang making it possible for the natives, by learning the Russian alp and a basic vocabulary, to make the transition to full use of Ru It was a crude and an entirely ineffective method. Khrushchev's f to change it after Stalin's death indicates that he does not inte change the Stalinist nationality policy. This aspect of Stalinist could be easily changed, and so doing would win the gratitu Soviet Muslims without really endangering Khrushchev's power.

Mr. Garip Sultan explained why the Cyrillic alphabet wa introduced in 1926. The Turkic scholars who participated in the Congress that year were opposed to the change. Turkic socialist Communists cooperated with Lenin at the time for the sole purpo having their claims to independence recognized, and Lenin h accede to their wishes for the sake of cooperation. Another reaso that the Latin alphabet was about to be introduced in Turkey a time. Actually, there was an attempt before the Baku Congre introduce the Cyrillic alphabet, but it was not even submitte debate. The Turkic groups, especially the Tatars and the Kaz

ed the idea since the Arabic script maintained cultural and lin- ic unity among them.

rofessor Halaši-Kun added a few comments on why the Latin abet replaced the Arabic alphabet in the Turkic languages in the . In the late nineteen-twenties there was a tendency, even among ussians, to change the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. Furthermore, e the Revolution, the various Turkic language groups in Russia one literary language called Chagatay. This was written the same everywhere but pronounced differently in different localities. The reason why the Soviets introduced the Latin alphabet was to inate this lingua franca and develop local differences in speech. fact that the Latin alphabet was introduced in Turkey would not been one of the reasons, since this was carried out later than change in the Soviet Union.

The next topic of discussion was the relationship between religion nationality. Professor Pipes' impression was that the majority of lims in Russia before the Revolution considered themselves prima- Muslims and not members of a given nationality. As a result of iet policies, however, this religious identity is gradually giving to national consciousness. Religion is still of importance, to be . A Volga Tatar, an Uzbek, or an Azeri Turk may primarily sider himself as such, but he would, nevertheless, feel a certain ity with other Muslims because Islam carries with it an outlook, adition, and a way of life. As for the intensity of national feeling, particularly strong in areas where a large number of Russians e settled. In Kazakhstan, for instance, the relations between the ives and the Russians are similar to those existing between the ve and French Algerians.

Mr. Sultan thereupon replied to a question concerning the teaching Arabic in Soviet schools. Arabic has been introduced in the schools Kazan and Tashkent. The cadres thus trained could be used in im- menting Soviet policy in the Near and Middle East. Unofficially, as a positive effect on Muslims in the USSR, since it makes it ier for them to re-establish cultural contacts with the Near and ddle East.

At 12 : 15 P. M. the chairman closed the discussion.

Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East

Colonel G. E. Wheeler

The past five years have witnessed the latest of Russia's attempts to establish her paramount influence in the Middle E is the most serious of these attempts because it is the most calcu and because Russia has never been so powerful as she is today.

Russia's relations with the Arab countries are of very recent but her association with the Muslim world is far older and intimate than that of any other European state. In the first plac Mongols who dominated Russian lands from the middle of the teenth century to the end of the fifteenth century were early conv to Islam. After the end of Mongol domination in 1480, Russia ceeded to annex the Muslim Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan these have been an integral part of Russia since the sixteenth cen Before the end of the seventeenth century Russia's frontiers ma with those of the two most important Muslim states, Turkey Persia. By the end of the nineteenth century the southern frin the Russian empire from the Crimea to Outer Mongolia was, wit exception of Georgia and Armenia, almost exclusively peopled by lims, whose number, including those of the Volga region, amou to nearly 20 million. It is highly significant that the Muslim Russia, unlike those of other empires, have never been separated the metropolitan country by the sea.

Russia's present frontiers with Turkey and Persia (which with minor modifications still mark the limit of her nineteenth cen expansion) can be regarded as reasonable in the circumstances. for over a century Russia has cherished ambitions which stretch beyond these frontiers, namely, the establishment of effective co over the eastern Mediterranean and the head of the Persian Gulf. to the Revolution she was prevented from realizing these ambiti partly by her own political and economic backwardness and pa by the concerted opposition of the Western powers. Twice she seemed to be very near gaining at least one of her objectives: Istan and the Straits were promised to her by the Sykes-Picot agreem of May 1916; and in the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement of 1940 area to the south of Batum and Baku, in the general direction of Persian Gulf, was recognized as the centre of the territorial ambit

Soviet Union. There is no reason to suppose that the failure has hitherto attended Russian hopes and plans has deflected Soviet Government from aims so closely bound up with Russia's and geographical position.

Until its entry into the Second World War the Soviet Union's pts to establish its influence in the Middle East had been no successful than those of Tsarist Russia. This was partly due to se of Middle East nationalism, partly to Western opposition, but of all to Soviet ineptitude and miscalculation. In 1941 Russian nce on and in Turkey and Persia was less than it had been in and the Arab world hardly regarded the USSR as a great power. 945, however, Soviet missions had been opened in Cairo, Beirut, ascus, and Baghdad, and the Soviet Army was once more in occu- n of North Persia. With the defeat of Germany, Russia was now better position vis-à-vis the Middle East than she had ever been e. But her attempt to bring about the disintegration of Persia ng 1945 and 1946 showed that the Soviet leaders had not yet led to abandon their earlier methods of direct action and sub- ion.

After 1947 the Soviet government appeared to adopt a much more ious and conciliatory attitude towards the countries of the Middle Nationalist and neutralist trends and signs of Anglo-American ion evidently suggested to the Soviet Government the advisability developing new methods and a more positive policy. The new y probably began to take shape after Stalin's death in 1953, or aps even earlier. But it did not become manifest until 1955, when broad outlines of present Soviet policy towards the "uncommitted" ntries of Africa and Asia emerged. The year 1955 saw the foun- on of the Baghdad Pact with what appeared to the Middle East trong militarist implications; of the Bandung Conference with its mation of the five principles of peaceful co-existence; and of great ances by the Pan-Arab nationalist ideology of Abd an-Nasir with increasingly anti-Western impetus. The adjustments of Soviet y and ideology which were necessary to take advantage of these elopments were made during 1955 and received formal confirma- at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.

An essential preliminary in the appreciation of any military or itical situation is definition of the objective. The aims of Soviet y towards the Middle East are a subject on which there has not general agreement in the West. Some people insist that the ulti- e aim of Soviet policy in the Middle East is the establishment

there of international communism, as if this were an end in
Such a view presupposes that Soviet policy is nowadays
more by the ideology of communism than by what the Sovie
Russia if you like, considers to be its national interests. Th
debatable matter, but it is perhaps important to remember t
though many things have changed in Russia, since the Revo
there remain certain immutable factors, such as geography, c
and national character. These factors, I submit, contribute more
formulation of foreign policy than any ideology or religion.

It is at least permissible to suppose that Russia's ultimat
is still what it was over a century ago—the establishment of Ru
or, if you like, Soviet, political, economic, and cultural influe
the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. I think most
will agree that this aim has been in the minds of Soviet leader
since the Revolution, but that they have often changed their
on the means by which this aim could best be attained. The
at present advocated by the Soviet Government amount to the
donment of earlier methods of subversion, violent revolution
reliance on local Communist parties, in favor of moral and m
support for all elements, including the bourgeoisie, propertied c
and clergy, in what is called "movements for national libera
directed against the West. These methods, although superficiall
alarming, are likely to prove more dangerous in the long run.
over, while in the eyes of the Middle East they seem to contrast f
ably with the military preparations of which the West is cons
accused, it is often forgotten that the Soviet Union has no ne
military pacts with Middle East countries. The present techniq
peaceful penetration could almost overnight be exchanged for
action.

The years 1956 and 1957 were in many ways profitable one
Soviet policy. The failure of the Suez venture was widely consi
by the Arabs to be the result of Soviet intervention, and the S
Union began to appear as the undoubted defender of Middle
rights. Western propaganda about the Soviet arms build-up in E
and Syria and about the possible dispatch of Soviet volunteers m
reinforced Arab convictions about Soviet readiness to fight their b
for them if the need should arise, not only against the West
against Israel. During 1957 and the first half of 1958 the opinion
widespread that except for Iraq and Jordan, the Arab countries
lost to the West and that Soviet influence would spread apace.
creation of the United Arab Republic, the disturbances in Leba

finally even the coup d'état in Iraq were all thought of as victories
communism. In fact, however, the Soviet Government was very
assailed by misgivings on the subject of Arab nationalism.

he ideological limitations of the rapprochement between the Soviet
n and the Arab countries began to appear more sharply after the
lishment of the UAR in February 1958. Soviet welcome for the
republic was not unqualified. Its creation was welcomed as an
imperialist move, but it was pointed out that the Arab unity
ement could be used for purposes contrary to the interest of the
le. Nasir's campaign against communism and his attitude towards
after the coup d'état were decisive in modifying the Soviet atti-
to Arab nationalism. In his address to the Iraqi economic dele-
on in March 1959, Khrushchev said that Nasir's ambition to make
part of the UAR was not realizable in the face of the opposition of
peoples of the countries concerned; he denounced the "measures
uppress freedom-loving aspirations" in the UAR. Dissatisfaction
the UAR did not mean, however, that the Soviet government
ided or even now regards the situation in Iraq with equanimity.
ar from being a source of comfort to the Soviet Union, the ac-
ies of the Iraqi Communist Party, or rather Parties, have been a
e of acute embarrassment. It would be different if the Iraqi frontier
hed directly on the USSR; but as it does not, the establishment
Communist government in a country situated as Iraq is situated
ht well precipitate a war in the Middle East, a situation which the
iet government is at present most anxious to avoid.

It is probably true to say that the West has gravely underesti-
ed the importance of Middle Eastern, and particularly Arab, na-
alism. But I think it is equally true to say that the Russians have
vely overestimated the extent to which they can exploit this nation-
m in their own interests in the same way as they have done with
Muslim peoples of Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

Any disillusionment which the Soviet government may feel on the
ject of Arab nationalism, has not impelled them to adopt a more
promising attitude towards Israel. Israel is classed with the USA,
ain, and France, as an oppressor nation. Nevertheless, Soviet
ers continually return to the theme that Israel and the Arabs, if
to themselves by the big powers, could settle their differences,
ich are merely a "product of imperialism." There is always a sug-
tion of Soviet impartiality in the dispute; this is perhaps in order
orrect any impression of direct Soviet interference or involvement
a dispute to which the Soviet Union is not a party.

It has always been an axiom of Tsarist and Soviet Middle E policy that its ultimate aim can only be achieved by doing away w the independence of Turkey and Persia. The present Soviet conc tration on the Arab states, and further east on Afghanistan and In simply means that, at any rate since the Second World War, Soviet government has regarded these two countries as nuts which too hard to crack and must therefore be by-passed for the pres Judging from the writings of Soviet experts, the Soviet governm has been studying the Turkish situation attentively and critically some time and they will certainly regard the latest developments th as affording possibilities for a new Soviet approach. The Turko-Sov Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression has been in abeyance sin 1945 when the Soviet government made the revision of the Stra regime and the restoration to the USSR of the territories of Kars a Ardahan conditions for its renewal. It seems probable that one or bo of these matters will soon be brought up again.

With only brief pauses, the Soviet propaganda machine has be fulminating against Persia and predicting the imminent downfall the present regime there ever since October 1958. The last attempt direct action and subversion in 1945 and 1946 was not only ineffectu but extremely expensive, and this fact no doubt explains the more less passive attitude which the Russians took towards Dr. Mosaddeq administration between 1951 and 1953. At the beginning of 195 largely because of the new situation in Iraq, the Soviet governmen made a serious attempt to wean Persia away from Western influenc by negotiating a new treaty with her. The failure of this attempt gav rise to some apprehension lest the Soviet Union in its desire to achiev a common frontier with Iraq might resort once again to direct actio against Persia. This possibility, not perhaps a very strong one, ha receded still further with the changed situation in Iraq. But for th Soviet Union Persia remains the keystone. If its predictions about th downfall of the present Persian regime are not fulfilled it will sooner or later have to make some further attempt to reestablish Soviet in fluence there.

The area composed of north-west Persia, north-east Iraq, eastern Turkey and Transcaucasia is a particularly sensitive one for all the countries concerned, the Soviet Union not excepted. I do not believe that the Russians are at all confident of their ability to keep the situation in this area under their control. Some people think that they may find a solution in creating an independent Kurdistan. The Rus sians have undoubtedly considered this possibility, but they are almost

certainly aware of the great difficulties it presents. All they do is to protest their support for the Kurds in their struggle for freedom *within the countries* where they live. In the words of the principal Soviet expert on Kurdish affairs, Kurdoyev, presumably himself a Kurd, "The democratic elements among the Kurdish people know well that the only way to the solution of the Kurdish question is by the unity of the Kurdish workers with the progressive forces of the Persian, Turkish, and Iraqi peoples and the formation of one front of struggle for freedom and democracy." It is sometimes forgotten that there are only some 60,000 Kurds in the Soviet Union and that in Transcaucasia where they live the Russians have already quite enough nationality problems to deal with without creating new ones.

A dispassionate appraisal of the conduct of Soviet Middle East policy in the past and of the advantages and disadvantages of the present Soviet position reveals a picture which shows little of that almost superhuman skill, prescience, and assurance which it has of late been the tendency to associate with the Soviet conduct of foreign affairs. Such an appraisal should be made on the basis not only of facts and events but of Soviet writing on Middle East subjects. It has been said of this writing that it is "little more than academic exercises in fitting Middle Eastern political events into Marxist-Leninist conceptual categories." But this is to underestimate the cardinal weakness of an ideology which must always compromise in the interests of policy and of a policy which must always seek an ideological justification. The very fact that Soviet writing is constantly subjected to such strains means that a careful and cumulative study of it will often reveal the main direction of official thinking.

The actual and potential advantages of the Soviet position in the Middle East today are considerable and must be squarely faced. The advantages of geographical proximity and of a totalitarian government unhampered by the whims of public opinion or the idiosyncrasies of Wall Street or the City of London are obvious. The same may be said of the advantage enjoyed by a newcomer to the Middle Eastern scene, especially when his patter includes colorful abuse of previous performers. Less obvious is the capital which the Soviet Union has been able to make out of its sponsorship of peace and its concentration on trade agreements in contrast to military pacts. Except for Persia, no Middle Eastern country has ever seen any Soviet armed forces, whereas those of the West have been a familiar sight all over the Middle East for upwards of 40 years. And there is a subconscious feeling, particularly among the Arabs, that in spite of its show of military force,

the West has been unable to make the grade or to replace the paramount power exercised by Ottoman rule. Other factors working in the Soviet favor are due to Soviet initiative; among them is the Soviet ability to draw on the Union's now vast academic resources for organized research into every kind of Middle East problem—political, economic, and cultural—and for the training of expert personnel for employment in Middle East countries.

There are two factors whose advantage to the Russians is now somewhat less than it appeared a few years ago. There are signs that the fiction of economic aid without strings is wearing somewhat thin and consequently losing its attraction. Secondly the Soviet Union has so far made only minimal use of the six Soviet Muslim republics abutting on the Middle East. This can only mean that the Soviet authorities are aware of the contradiction which exists between their suppression of bourgeois nationalism in these republics and their support of it in the Middle East. Great as are the material achievements in the Muslim Union republics, a genuine lifting of the barrier between them and the Muslims of the Middle East, still supposed to be under the yoke of colonialism, might have disastrous results for the USSR: Muslims both inside and outside the USSR might realize for the first time the difference between the status of the Union republics and the nationalism which is tolerated by or can be wrested from the West.

Finally there is what might be called the balancing factor of Anglo-American cooperation in Middle East affairs. Where this falters, and it is senseless to pretend that it never does so, Soviet prestige among the Middle Eastern peoples prospers and that of the West wanes. When it is firm and strong as over Azerbaidzhan in 1946 and over Lebanon and Jordan in the autumn of 1958, the reverse takes place and Soviet policy becomes cautious. The natural difficulties in achieving and maintaining this cooperation are great and they are constantly added to by Soviet propaganda, particularly on the subject of oil—a proof, if one were needed, of the importance the Soviet Union attaches to the matter. In the Middle East more than anywhere else, concerted Anglo-American action spells ruin for Soviet policy. The rarity of such action is one of the main reasons for the precarious situation in the Middle East today.

Compared with past years the situation in the Middle East is at present relatively quiet; but it remains a power vacuum and as such an arena for power politics. At present it cannot be said that any power wields decisive influence in the area and it is on obtaining such

influence as was formerly held by the West that the Soviet Union is intent. For the moment it believes that it can achieve its aim by peaceful penetration. Its task is not an easy one for it still has much leeway to make up, for instance, in business methods and in adroitness in dealing with Middle East governments. It still has to oust English from its intrenched position as the language of western culture and commercial intercourse.

The task of the West is equally if not more difficult. While it may appreciate the need for removing its unfortunate and undeserved reputation for bellicosity, it cannot afford to forget that the present Soviet methods of peaceful penetration might quite suddenly be replaced by those of direct action or subversion.

Communism and the Arab World

Saadat Hasan

Many an article has been written in the past about Communist penetration into the Middle East. From reading such articles, published in Western newspapers, one might get the impression that certain Arab countries have embraced communism or have become Russian satellites. Indeed, more than one Arab state has been referred to by some Western journalists in the last five years as sympathetic to communism or even as Communist dominated.

Both Egypt and Syria until their merger on February 21, 1958, and even for a short period afterwards, were referred to and labeled as such. The same is being said today about the Rupublic of Iraq. Had such reports been truthful and factual, they would have been a matter of great concern not only to the West but to the Arabs as well.

There is no doubt that the reports describing Egypt and Syria as being pro-Communist proved to be contrary to the facts and without foundation. Those reports were only alarming to certain individuals in the West. The Arabs themselves never took them seriously. The Arabs viewed this alarm as primarily the result of the determination of certain Western leaders to continue to regard the Arab world as part of their sphere of influence. Many a Western leader referred to the Arab world as being "lost" to the West, as if the Arab world had ever been the property of the West.

In my opinion, the reports that were disseminated were primarily the result of certain allegations and accusations, the result of certain policies followed by Western leaders who refused to realize that the Arabs of today are not the Arabs of yesterday, leaders who refused to walk with history and insisted on walking behind history. Those leaders, unaccustomed to see any Arab government emerge on the scene to pursue a policy independent from those that were dictated in London, Paris, or Washington, were really alarmed when some Arab governments broke away from the isolationary measures that were imposed upon them by the West.

Two reservations ought to be mentioned at the outset, in order to set the record straight.

Though communism has been operating in the Middle East for about forty years, Arab Communists constitute a small infinitesimal

segment of the population. Communism itself is outlawed in each and every Arab state and is considered a subversive movement by the respective governments. Thus it operates underground in secret groupings and organizations.

Could we assume that the situation in Iraq today is the same as it was in Egypt in 1956-58? This is a question that is very difficult to answer at this time. Only time, in my opinion, will supply the answer. But one thing seems certain; a face-to-face confrontation between Arab nationalism and communism has started to take place.

This confrontation will, and should, focus the attention of those who are interested in the Middle East on the outcome of that struggle which will undoubtedly have tremendous influence on the Arab nationalist movement by helping to define its ideological and philosophical tenets. It will help to crystallize the political and economic aspirations of the Arab people. Moreover, the outcome of that struggle will have tremendous impact on the relationship of the Arab people with the outside world, whether it is the West or the East or those who have not yet committed themselves to either camp. It is erroneous and misleading to assume that the world is divided only into two camps, "East" and "West," conveniently forgetting that the vast majority of the nations of the world have not joined either one. The tendency in the West is to ignore the existence of a third alternative in policy that could be pursued.

This confrontation between Arab nationalism and communism seems to have come as a surprise to many a person, but although those in the Arab world who are interested in the development of ideologies and aware of the history of the Communist party were not surprised that this struggle started, they were, nevertheless, surprised at the timing. They were surprised by when it started. It came at a time when the Soviet Union was enjoying high prestige in the Arab world. Very few Arab nationalists thought that the Communist Party in Iraq, or in any other Arab state, whether by its own choice or through the instigation and direction of higher forces, would then emerge as a competitor for power. On the contrary, Arab nationalists rightly assumed that the Communists would have more to lose than to gain by emerging as contenders for power because they would have to endure the wrath of all the Arab countries and be prepared for a long and, maybe, a bitter struggle.

Though it was never the goal nor the intention of Arab nationalists to seek a face-to-face confrontation with communism and thereby to open a new battlefront at this juncture in Arab history, when Arabs

are primarily preoccupied with a long and bitter struggle against the forces of traditional colonialism and neo-colonialism and against the forces of expansionist Zionism, the Arabs nevertheless have long been aware that they must clarify their position regarding communism. The necessity of defining a positive stand on communism as a total system was imperative to the Arabs in order to discover the appeal that this system has to the minds and hearts of people. This seemed essential because communism was parading as a final result of all the experiences and philosophies known to man, and as the new faith, the faith by which humanity was to abide in the future.

Formulating an Arab position with regard to communism was also essential due to the ideological and political impact that communism has had on Europe and certain parts of the Far East. This necessity of defining the Arab stand was not the result of the direct impact that communism has had upon the Arab scene. Whatever contact there had been between communism and Arab society had been primarily superficial and temporary.

Moreover, the conviction of Arab nationalists that their homeland is an integral part of the world and that Arab destiny is linked to that of the rest of the world, made the definition of an Arab stand on communism essential. Isolationism, indifference, and disinterest have no place in the mind of Arab nationalists. What takes place between the East and the West, what success communism achieves in Asia or in Europe, what alliances and pacts the United States initiates and sponsors could not but be of importance to Arab nationalists, for they are partners to world peace and stability and are just as concerned with such universal problems as the rest of the world.

The Arab stand on communism may be divided into two basic components depending on the nature of the stand: political and ideological. Although the political stand in general is dependent upon and stems from the ideological stand, realism, political flexibility, and the necessary consideration of prevailing circumstances make it imperative, on occasion, to shelve ideology for the sake of political considerations. The political stand should be a means to guarantee the continuous and successful perpetuation of the ideological, and should always be viewed as a means to achieve its true maturity. The successful expression of the ideological stand will depend primarily on the ability to enter into a truce with one of the many dangers that may confront the ideology while acting against a more imminent danger. The capacity to postpone dealing with one threat while concentrating on another more immediate one is of the utmost importance. Such tactics, based on

flexibility and no sacrifice of the ideological values, are necessary and accepted practices in diplomacy.

Any political stand on communism must take into consideration the changing character of communism itself. Communism today has become almost alien to Marx's theories and ideologies. In other words, a political stand vis-à-vis communism cannot be static and fixed if this stand is to be successful and effective. The political stand must also at all times be a true expression of the national interest, generated from the national way of life and from the ideological tenets and in harmony with national thought and values.

It is axiomatic to state that the success of an Arab nationalist movement, revolutionary in its philosophies and doctrines, dynamic in its methods and tactics, in expressing the needs of the Arab society and championing the cause of the masses of the people struggling to attain their aspirations of independence, unity, and a more abundant life based on freedom and social justice, will make the justification for the existence of Communist parties on the Arab scene unnecessary and the adoption of communism as an ideology, whether partially or completely, unessential. The extent to which the latent potentialities and the revolutionary capabilities of the Arab nationalist movement are realized will determine the extent to which the door will remain open for communism to capitalize on the weaknesses and undesirable conditions in the Arab world.

Although Arab nationalism cannot accept internal political coexistence with communism and, therefore, a state of positive rivalry between the two is inevitable, the circumstances and prevailing conditions in which the Arab nationalists find themselves are the determining factors in defining the extent to which Arab activity will compete with communism for the minds and hearts of the Arab masses. Arab nationalists could not for a long time assume the artificial role of fighting communism and becoming pre-occupied with this struggle, for they were confronting threats they considered more immediate and more dangerous. To the Arabs, colonialism has been a real and an immediate threat that breeds communism by perpetuating the undesirable conditions upon which communism flourishes and which it uses to its own great advantage. As long as the Arabs are exposed to and confronted with colonialism operating effectively on the Arab scene and determined to maintain the status quo, as long as the Arabs have basic problems pertaining to the restoration of their long lost freedom, and as long as the Arabs remain involved actively in a struggle against world Zionism, temporary tactical co-existence with communism rather

than antagonistic confrontation was thought to be more advisable and a surer way to success. The determination of colonialism to maintain its hold on Arab society is, therefore, a factor that has forced the Arabs to choose a temporary truce with communism and to postpone their positive rivalry with it. In instances where Arab policies do coincide with those of the Communists, it would be ridiculous to assume a hostile attitude toward communism and to refuse to benefit from that opportunity.

The policies of the Communist parties in the Arab countries, as in practically every other country, evolve from the foreign policy formulated by the Communist International and stem from the conditions and interests of the Soviet Union and her conflict with the West. Communist domestic policies in the Arab world have always been a mere reflection of Communist foreign policy. The foreign policies of the Arab nationalists, on the other hand, are derived primarily from the domestic needs of Arab society. Arab nationalist policies evolve first and foremost from the Arab revolutionary spirit and ideology and are based on the goals of realizing the resurrection of the Arab nation from within. They are motivated by the determination of the Arabs to realize their potentialities, and to achieve a dynamic, progressive society in freedom and in unity. The Arab Communists, on the other hand, have been ignoring and belittling these aspirations. They have been viewing them on the external and the international scene; and in such a manner that the interests of the Soviet Union are always uppermost.

In defining the Arab political stand on communism, it is imperative to differentiate between local communism and the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that the Communists in the Arab world work for the interests of the Soviet Union and view Arab national problems from that particular perspective, in the eyes of the Arabs they represent something other than mere advocates of Russia's policies. The Communist Party is an organization operating within the Arab homeland. It has its structure within the Arab nation. It attracts members from within the rank and file of the Arab people. It monopolizes the activities of an integral part of the Arab intelligentsia. It is a party that speaks the Arabic language. As such, the Communist Party is a rival to the nationalist movement not only in its ideologies and philosophies, but also through its organizational appeal. The Arabs' struggle with the Communists, therefore, cannot be limited to policies alone. It should not and could not stop, even if the policies of the two do coincide. As a matter of fact, the danger increases whenever Communist policies and those of the nationalists become similar, due to the confusion of identity that the Communists are capable of exploiting.

The record of the Communist parties in the Arab world has not been satisfactory or acceptable. When the nationalists were pre-occupied with the struggle for independence from Western domination, the Communists were primarily spreading slogans that had little to do with Arab aspirations and goals, and catering to the interests of the Soviet Union. Their vacillation based on the changing stands of the Soviet Union during the Second World War is a clear cut indication of whose interests they serve. The Soviet Union, in spite of being a Communist state, leading, guiding, and sometimes dominating the Communist parties, remained a state operating realistically and considering its national interests, self-preservation, the maintenance of its influence, and the enhancement of its prestige within the scope of the international situation. This realistic interest of the Soviet Union is not limited to, nor always dependent upon, the support of the Communist Party. In fact, we have seen more than one occasion on which Russia sacrificed local Communists within a certain country in order to gain a more widely spread prestige.

Communism has failed to leave a substantial impact on Arab society, even though it has been operating therein for almost forty years. This failure is due to certain elements of strength that are an integral part of the Arab personality. The average Arab is basically spiritualistic and religious; communism to him is atheism and materialism. He is highly individualistic; communism is regimentationism. He is nationalistic; communism with its avowed aim of world domination is internationalistic. The Arab intelligentsia views communism as an alien ideology born in the West as a result of clashing nationalities and conducive socio-economic conditions. For the Arabs to choose between their own way of life, their heritage, their spiritual, metaphysical, religious values and their mission on the one hand, and communism with all its social, economic and political manifestations on the other hand, is not difficult. The Arabs, no doubt, will choose their own way of life.

Unfortunately, the choice is not as simple as that. Other factors do enter into the picture. Of these factors, the experiences that the Arabs have with the West play an important role. The Arab world is keenly conscious politically. For sure, it is not satisfied politically with the West. Grievances, real or imagined, do exist. The average Arab can draw up a long list of promises that were unilaterally withdrawn, of pledges that were arbitrarily revoked, of hostilities and divisions en-

couraged among groups and states, of corrupt regimes established and maintained against the interests of the people, of alliances and pacts organized and sponsored, of military occupation and suffering, of threats and armed aggression, and of many opportunities missed, when badly needed help and aid were simply withheld and denied.

The Soviet Union on the other hand, without such a record, was able to capitalize on these mistakes to enhance her prestige in the Middle East. There are many factors which were responsible for the enhancement of Russian prestige in this area. Among them is the role that the West played in the creation of the state of Israel. Though the Soviet Union supported the partition of Palestine in 1947, it became apparent that it did so to create muddy waters in the Middle East.

In the early fifties, the Soviet Union adopted a position more favorable toward the Arab viewpoint than that of the West. Western support of Israel above and beyond the call of duty is another factor that Russia capitalized upon in dealings with the Arabs to enhance prestige. Still another factor is the support that Russia gave for the liberation movements of Arab North Africa from French rule. The West, including the United States, whenever these questions were brought up to the attention of the councils of nations, saw fit to shy away from such support. The Arabs feel that the West supports freedom movements when Russia is the aggressor, and shys away when one of its members is the aggressor. This behavior is bewildering to the vast majority of the Arabs who view the struggle for freedom as indivisible. A third factor which enhanced Russian prestige in the Middle East is the economic sanctions that were explicitly or implicitly imposed upon certain Arab states when they refused to enter into pacts and alliances sponsored by the West. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, helped those Arab countries in their attempt to break away from this isolationary chain that was imposed upon them. A fourth factor which enhanced Russian prestige in the Middle East was the tripartite aggression against Egypt in the fall of 1956. Needless to say, that venture proved to be detrimental to Western interests in the area. A fifth factor was the landing of United States marines in Lebanon and British paratroopers in Jordan.

Should the West despair and lose hope in cooperating with the Arabs? It is my conviction that a reservoir of good will toward the West still exists in the Arab world. Ideologically, socially, culturally, and economically, the Arab world is far closer to the West than it is to the Soviet Union. There is no affinity whatsoever between the Arab way of life and communism.

The West has to take the initiative and realize that it is dealing with a different Arab nation, a revolutionary and dynamic nation, determined to achieve complete emancipation from foreign domination, whether it is Eastern or Western, a nation that is determined to put an end to the artificial fragmentation that was super-imposed upon it by the outside world, a nation that is determined to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, and low standards of living. The West should realize that Arab nationalism is here to stay, and that the crystallization of its tenets is the real barrier to Communist penetration in the Middle East. The West should view Arab nationalism as a progressive and not an aggressive movement, as a dynamic and not a reactionary movement. Once the West pursues a policy independent from colonial designs and free from the vested interests of a small pressure group, I believe that rapprochement based on mutual respect, mutual interests, and mutual understanding between the Arab people and the peoples of the West can be achieved. As far as the Arab people are concerned, our hands are stretched out for Western friendship and cooperation.

Some Preliminary Observations on the Beginnings of Communism in the Arab East

John Batatu

One of the serious problems in a study of this nature is how to achieve detachment. The Communist Revolution is to-day, directly or indirectly, a commanding event in our lives and we are too deeply involved in its consequences to be altogether unaffected by the enthusiasm or hostility it has evoked. Due to a failing on our part or an undetectable bias in our sources, subjective elements may, perhaps unavoidably, find their way into the discussion, no matter how hard we may try to eliminate their influence.

Another difficulty relates to the immense gaps in our knowledge not only of the Arab Communist movement but also of the complex of social and economic relationships within which this movement has been taking place. Moreover, the wide divergence in conditions from one Arab country to another increases the dangers inherent in any attempt at generalization.

Personally, I feel that I can speak with some degree of confidence only on the Communists of the Arab Fertile Crescent and, in particular, of Iraq. In this report I cannot go beyond the early formative years of their history. The period, as is known, is an obscure one and the materials are scattered and do not lend themselves easily to an orderly and continuous exposition. My research has also not been exhaustive. The survey that follows can, therefore, only be regarded as tentative.

My sources include, in part, materials that I found in the Internal Security Library of the Ministry of Interior of Iraq, such as: 1) the files of the Iraqi police on the Communist movement; 2) the papers and records of the various central and local committees of the Iraqi Communist Party that were seized in the period 1946—1955; 3) the British secret Intelligence Reports, Abstracts of Intelligence, and Supplements to the Abstracts of Intelligence referring to the period of the "mandate"; and 4) the files of Major J. F. Wilkins. The latter was officially the Deputy Inspector General of the Iraqi Police in the nineteen-twenties and later acted as a "technical advisor" of the Iraqi government. His files were of great value in view of his connections with Scotland Yard, with the British "Special Branch" in Persia, the British "C.I.D." ("Criminal Investigation Department") in Palestine, and the French "Service de la Sûreté Générale" in Syria and Lebanon.

How Tendencies of a Levelling Nature Existed in the Arab East Prior to the Outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia

In the immediate months following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, when after long years of relentless suppression public opinion in the eastern Arab lands revelled briefly in unhindered freedom, unfamiliar feelings and inclinations came to the surface in Lebanon. In part they took the expression of a vehement attack on the authority of the priests by a number of Christian men of letters.[1] The framework of life in that country was broadly religious. The churches, in consequence, were firmly entrenched in the society, and the priests controlled enormous landholdings and ruled like autocrats over the intellectual and material life of their parishioners.* It was apparently from this clerical domination that the intelligentsia sought to emancipate itself. Some of the writers also believed that religion sowed hatred and dissension among the people.[2] Others thought that all religions shared the same verities and that all the people should, therefore, join in a common brotherhood. Characteristic of the new spirit was this advice by a Christian poet to his brother Moslem:

> Leave my priest and your *shaikh*** in their disputations,
> And come and speak to me of essential matters.[3]

These sentiments were accompanied by inclinations of a more radical coloring. We know of their presence only indirectly from the reaction of the over-sensitive priesthood. In the contemporary writings of Louis Sheikho, an influential spokesman of the clerical class, there are references to "certain poets"[4] and "some seditious and riotous persons"[5] who "exceeded all bounds" and demanded the abolition not only of all authority but also of all differences between men and classes. "They have no use," he tells us, "for the *saiyid**** or the *amir*,***** the learned

[1] See *Al-Mashrik* (Beirut) XIth Year Number 10 of October 1908, pp. 792—793 and XIIth Year Number 2 of February 1909, p. 96.

* What largely contributed to this development was the fact that the priests had managed in the course of the nineteenth century to attract to themselves much of the power of the old feudal leaders. Our remarks are particularly applicable to the priests of the Maronites who form the majority of Christians in Lebanon.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

** In this context the title *shaikh* refers to men of religion.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 94—95.

[5] *Al-Mashrik* XIth Year Number 11 of November 1908, p. 866.

*** *Saiyid:* a title which at that time was applied more particularly to persons who were or were recognized to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

**** An *amir* is a chief or prince.

or the wealthy."[6] "They allege that all people have the same right in property, wealth, noble rank, and authority."[7] This is against "all the natural and moral laws," he affirmed.[8] "How can the *imam*,* the priest, and the bishop be put on the same level as the vulgar and market people?"[9] All individual and social differences are, he claimed, the work of God and man has no right to complain of his lot, for God's answer to him would be: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" (Romans 9 : 20—21).[10]

The inclinations, against which were thus arrayed God and Bible, were in a sense the progenitors of that movement that grew around the Lebanese paper *Ash-Shams* ("The Sun") and inspired the formation in Beirut in 1928 and in Basrah in 1929 of the Jam'iyyat Al-Ahrar ("The Association of Liberals"), better known by the name given it by its adversaries as Al-Hizb Al-Hurr Al-Ladini ("The Anti-Religious Liberal Party"),[11] which was the first open political organization formed by Arab Communists in the East.[12]

What, one may wonder, accounted for the existence of levelling ideas in Lebanon in 1908? In all probability their source was the "Hentchak" ("The Bell"),[13] a movement of young Armenian revolutionaries that was active at this time in the underground in various Ottoman cities and particularly in Constantinople. The Hentchak owed its origin to the initiative of a few Armenian students who began publishing a paper by that name in Geneva in 1887. Its long-range aim was the unification of all Armenians in one socialist state. In the nineteen-hundreds it identified itself as a "social democratic" organization and cooperated closely with the Bolsheviks in the Caucasus

[6] *Al-Mashrik* of February 1909, p. 95.

[7] *Al-Mashrik* XIth Year Number 11 of November 1908, p. 866.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 867.

* *Imam* is a term which in Sunni Muslim usage applies to both the Caliph and to the leader of the congregational prayer.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 869.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Source: Iraqi Police Dossier entitled "Al-Hizb Al-Hurr Al-Ladini."

[12] See also below, pp. 60 and 67—69.

[13] The information that follows is largely based on a letter dated June 14, 1937, written by Arsen Kitour, a member of the Hentchak, to an Armenian student group at the American University of Beirut. The letter was intercepted and is in Major Wilkins' *File No 1158* entitled "Arsen Kitour."

against the more nationalistically-inclined "Dashnagtzoutian" (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). Among the more militant of its members were Sarkis Haykouni, Hayk Ohanessian, Khoren Sarkissian, and Arsen Kitour. Students were preponderant in the organization and in 1910 formed their own auxiliary "Student Union of the Social Democratic Hentchakian," and in the following year started publishing the *Gaidz* ("The Spark").[14] The activities of the Hentchak, however, soon came to a halt. After holding in 1914 a secret congress, which was attended by 56 delegates from the various Ottoman provinces, the society was discovered by the Turkish police. Many of its members were arrested and twenty of them suffered death by hanging. They were charged with plotting to murder Enver Pasha, then Turkey's Minister of War.[15] However, one of the leaders, Arsen Kitour, saved his neck allegedly by escaping prison[16] and was fated, as we shall see, to have a hand in the nineteen-twenties in the rise of communism in Iraq.[17]

How Communism Was Early Associated with Islam and How this Was to Incline Minds Favorably Toward Communism

It would be hasty to conclude from the preceding observations that in Ottoman days levelling ideas appealed only to intellectuals of the racial and religious minorities. There are definite traces of their influence in the thought of 'Abd-ur-Rahman Al-Kawakibi (1848—1902), a native of Aleppo and an eminent Moslem revivalist. In his *Tabai' Al-Istibdad* (The Attributes of Tyranny), Al-Kawakibi went even to the length of asserting that the seventh century Islamic government of the Orthodox Caliphs, "the like of which history has never reproduced among men," had created among Muslims "the conditions of a Communist[18] existence that can hardly be found even among brothers . . . nursed by the same mother."[19]

From such accounts of his life as are available, it is apparent that Al-Kawakibi had great sympathy for the common people. In his home town he was known as Abu-d-Du'afa — the Father of the Weak. Undoubtedly his was the first note in modern Arabic literature on behalf

[14] "The Spark" *(Iskra)* was the name of the organ of the Bolshevik Party till 1904.

[15] This detail is not mentioned in Arsen Kitour's letter but is taken from British intelligence records. Source: Wilkins' *File No 1158.*

[16] This is according to Kitour's own version.

[17] See below, pp. 60—61 and 63.

[18] *Ishtirakiyyah*—which then was the term for "Communist" and not for "Socialist" as at present. The word for "Socialist" at that time was *"ijtima'iyyah."*

[19] *Tabai' Al-Istibdad*, Al-Ma'arif Press, Cairo, 1900 (?), p. 25.

of the yet silent, sunken masses of society. What is perhaps more striking in an age of complacent fatalism is his mood of rebellion. Indeed in his pages he spared none of the established powers. He lashed at the capricious tyranny of the Ottoman sultans and laid bare the moral decadence it brought in its wake. He bitterly assailed the "official" *'ulama** for cultivating pretence and neglecting virtue, for turning religion into a field for gain and exalting superstitions into divine dogmas.[20] He poured scorn on the notables—in their generality—for their conceit and their waste of life, and even more for their grovelling self-abasement before despotic power.[21] These sentiments were obviously not calculated to endear him to the "pillars" of society. Hardly more palatable was his appeal if only for a modest share for the many in the wasted abundance of the few.

"Human beings share the hardships of life in an unjust way," wrote Al-Kawakibi around 1900,

> for men of politics and religion and their hangers-on—and their number does not exceed one per cent—enjoy half or more of what congeals from the blood of humanity, and squander it in self-indulgent luxury.[22]

And then:

> Those who trade in precious and luxurious commodities and the avaricious merchants and the monopolists and the like of this class, and they number also around one per cent, live each of them as live tens, or hundreds, or thousands of workers and peasants . . . It is not a question of equating the scholar who spends a lifetime in the acquisition of useful knowledge with the drowsy ignoramus or the active and enterprising with the indolent and the sluggard, but justice requires other than that inequality, and humaneness imposes that the elevated should take the lowly by his hand and bring him close to his rank and his mode of life.[23]

Whence this inequality that Al-Kawakibi so abhorred, this "social tyranny that is guarded by the citadels of political tyranny?"[24]

"It is the natural order among animals . . . that the members of the same species do not eat one another but man devours man."[25] It is this

* The *'ulama* are canonists or theologians.

[20] For his attack on the *'ulama* see his *Umm Al-Kura* (The Mother-city), (Original undated edition), pp. 23–33.

[21] See *Tabai' Al-Istibdad*, pp. 55–58.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

"injustice that dwelleth in the instinct of man"[26] that is the root of the whole problem. From it arises political tyranny which in turn leads to extreme economic inequality.[27] This apparently is the sequence of history. On the other hand, the building of great individual fortunes "strengthens internal tyranny by dividing the people into slaves and masters and external tyranny by facilitating aggression on the freedom and independence of weaker nations."[28] For this reason[29] and in order to "preserve equality among men in regard to money power," "heavenly laws and political and ethical wisdom banned usury."[30] The accumulation of capital is, consequently, not permissible except under three conditions.[31] First, it must be lawful, that is, things should only be acquired by exchange, or against surety, or in return for labor performed, or if they are from the bounty of nature. Secondly, accumulation should not involve any encroachment on the needs of others as by the "monopoly of necessities or the oppression of weak laborers or the seizure of what is public as, for example, the appropriation of the land, which God has created for the enjoyment of all his creatures . . ."[32] Finally, accumulation should not be much in excess of needs because immoderate wealth does not only foster tyranny but is also morally perverting.

Obviously Al-Kawakibi's appeal for a more equitable division of the income of the community rested on rational and, primarily, ethical principles rather than on a scientific or historical necessity. Besides, the strongly ethical direction of his thought blended with a marked preference for gradualism. He thus frowned on the use of force and held that change could best be effected through a growth in the consciousness of the community which education alone could induce.[33] All this indicates that his ideas had partly their source in the pre-Marxian socialism of the early nineteenth century. Otherwise and in regard to his thought as a whole—which incidentally included varied and not always reconcilable elements—his main indebtedness appears to have been to Vittorio Alfieri da Asti's *Della Tirannide*[34] and ultimately to de Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 76–8.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[33] See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 173.

[34] Alfieri (1749–1803) was an Italian writer and playwright and, like Montesquieu, belonged to the noble class.

It is time now to point out that Al-Kawakibi belonged to the class of the *ashraf*. Membership in this class was essentially a matter of birth and was hereditary. The sanction for it was the religion of the people. The *ashraf* (plural of *sharif*), also known as *sadah* (plural of *saiyid*), were or claimed to be of the Prophet's blood. Their social position was built on that premise. Convenient traditions even sought to dignify their rights and their privileges, their virtues and their vices by the impress of divine calculation.

The question that immediately arises is how a member of Islam's highest class—the Aleppo *nakibs* or marshals of the *ashraf* were for long drawn from Al-Kawakibi's family—became susceptible to more or less "unsettling" ideas.

It is perhaps worthy of notice that in the second half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth many of the standard-bearers of dissent, rebellion, or revival in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were from the *ashraf* class. Jamal-ud-Din Al-Afghani[35] who excited in almost all the lands of Islam a spirit of Pan-Muslim reform, Rashid Rida who led the Salafiyyah movement,[36] Shukri Al-Alusi who appealed for the purification of the faith, Talib An-Nakib who stirred up nationalist feelings against the Turks in Iraq in the days before the First World War, Husain of the Hashemites who launched the Arab Revolt of 1916—all were *ashraf*. Was there, one wonders, any inherent unity beneath the outward diversity of all these exertions? Wherein, in other words, lay the roots of this restlessness of Islam's nobility?

The historical behavior of individuals or of classes seldom proceeds from a single cause and we would be the last to question that multiple and complex factors actuated the *ashraf*. Here, however, only a general and incomplete explanation would be provided in the hope that it may add perspective to Al-Kawakibi's rebellious temper.[37]

In the early nineteenth century the *ashraf* carried great weight in that conglomeration of all but nominally independent principalities that was the Ottoman Empire. Their influence, to be sure, differed

[35] Al-Afghani was by origin from non-Ottoman Afghanistan but had great impact on the Muslim intelligentsia in the Ottoman lands.

[36] The Salafiyyah was in essence a traditionalist movement but it turned its back on the existing Islam in which it could only see ugliness and degeneracy and drew its inspiration from the Islam of the *Salaf*, "the Ancestors," i. e., the Prophet and the Orthodox Caliphs. Rashid Rida also figured prominently in the drive for Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

[37] The following few paragraphs are in effect a summary of an independent study I made of the *ashraf* class.

from city to city according to local conditions but in view of its deep religious roots was as continuous as the power of the local Pashas was ephemeral. Understandably the Turkish sovereigns kept an eye on them and, where they had their say, avoided placing them in prominent political positions lest one of them should fancy to set himself up as a Caliph. But in at least some of the Arab cities the upper Sunni *'ulama*—and the knowledge of the Muslim law and religion was then obviously one of the more socially meaningful aptitudes—tended to be drawn from the *ashraf*. The latter also enjoyed various privileges, amongst others that of being subject in each city not to the ruling Pasha but to a member of their own family who, as already noted, was called the *nakib*. Besides, some of the important *awkaf* (endowments), which were in the care of leading *ashraf*, appear to have been *mustathna*, i. e., exempt from the financial control of the government. No less significant was the fact that, by virtue of the dispersal of authority and the poor communications, the more powerful of the landed *ashraf* ruled over their estates almost in undisputed sovereignty.

As the century advanced, however, the *ashraf* became increasingly involved in a new and rather unrelenting process. Impelled by the inordinate desires of Europe and taking advantage of the new communications, the Ottoman sultans began attracting to themselves all the elements of power hitherto diffused among a crowd of landed families, tribal shaikhs, and privileged corporate orders. The instruments of the new policy were the *Walis*—the Ottoman version of the "Intendants"—who soon succeeded in establishing themselves in most of the major cities, although in quite a few regions Ottoman authority continued to be no more than a fiction. At any rate, the *ashraf* found themselves being slowly and gradually edged out of their former power.[38] The worst turn for them came in the reign of Sultan 'Abd-ul-Majid (1839—1861) when the class fell out of grace and the influence of its *nakibs* was almost destroyed. It is not without interest that in his *Umm Al-Kura*, Al-Kawakibi adduced this as an argument in support of his appeal for setting up a Kuraishi* Arab as Caliph.[39] But however the *ashraf* might have felt about the decline of their *nikabahs*, nothing could have distressed them more than the attack on the most sensitive part of their private interest, particularly in the reign of

[38] In non-Ottoman Afghanistan a somewhat similar fate overtook Jamal-ud-Din Al-Afghani's family whose members ruled as sovereigns over the lands of Kinir until about the middle of the nineteenth century.

* Kuraish is the tribe to which the Prophet belonged.

[39] See *Umm Al-Kura*, pp. 137—138.

Sultan 'Abd-ul-Hamid (1876–1909). The latter instituted a regular policy of impoverishing the landed class. He distinguished himself by the facility with which he converted choice estates into his personal property without ever paying for them. This perhaps at bottom is not a very peculiar habit but then with him it reached such proportions that by the end of the nineteenth century some 30 per cent of the best cultivated lands in the wilayahs of Baghdad and Basrah and considerable areas in other provinces had become the private property of the Turkish crown.[40]

Not all the *ashraf* were equally affected by these developments, partly because the Sultan's power was not always effective and partly because some *ashraf* were more able to hold their own than others. Furthermore, what we might call "service-*ashraf*" and "service-*'ulama*," i. e. *ashraf* and *'ulama* whose status rested primarily on their services to the sultan, were now much in evidence. It was in fact on the latter and on other upstart notables of the like that Al-Kawakibi vented his wrath. Incidentally, one of these "service-*ashraf*"[41] succeeded in wresting the Aleppo *nikabah* from Al-Kawakibi's family.

The trend just described, i. e. the advance of centralized power, was to reach its culmination in the 1908 Young Turk Revolution—only a few years after the death of Al-Kawakibi. Much to the horror of the *ashraf*, the Revolution did not only radicalize past processes but seemed also intent on demolishing the old social conceptions, the old modes of thought, indeed the very Islamic fabric that had hitherto shored up their privileged position and their social dominance. Hence the greater intensity of their resistance. Too divided in their individual motives, they were, of course, unable to react in unison. Eventually, however, Arab "nationalism" in its incipient form proved to be the palladium of their class—the last dyke of the old order, so to say. Under a nationalist outer covering, the *ashraf* and the worn-out social institutions that they symbolized gained a new lease of life. But as Arab nationalism gathered force and assumed forms truer to its nature it became obvious that the *ashraf* had only escaped Scylla to be wrecked upon Charybdis . . .

Enough has been said of the general circumstances which gave rise to *Tabai' Al-Istibdad* and *Umm Al-Kura* to leave no doubt that in these works Al-Kawakibi was not attacking an old situation but a

[40] These lands were known as *saniyyah* lands.

[41] Abu-l-Huda As-Sayyadi, then a well-known agent and confidant of Sultan 'Abd-ul-Hamid but apparently a *saiyid* of questionable lineage.

new development. His heart was truly with the old society. But he could not afford to ignore the decay that had overtaken it. He, therefore, sought refuge—like the romantic Salafiyyah—in the more distant past and came to insist that the community could be saved if only it trusted to the Islamic tradition in its original Arab purity. However, he himself was not entirely faithful to that tradition, for in his eagerness to idealize it he attributed to it a number of concepts alien in origin and character. That in doing this he should have partly drawn on Montesquieu is quite natural. His problem after all was not without analogy to that of the French nobleman. The latter too detested the absolutist drift of the French monarchs of the eighteenth century and was at pains to discover the means of restoring traditional aristocratic liberties. Al-Kawakibi's other graftings upon the Islamic tradition are more reminiscent of the not very happy attempts of certain parsons of the nineteenth century to give Christianity a Communist tinge.

Thus to Al-Kawakibi the ideal solution for the prevailing state of inequality and tyranny lay in a return to the principles of the Islamic society of the Orthodox Caliphs. Politically, that society is alleged to have been built on two foundations: "a democratic administration"[42] and "an aristocratic *shura*," i.e. advice by the nobles.[43] As to the economic order, "the equality or nearness in rights and in living conditions . . that the Communists, the Nihilists, the Socialists, and others are striving for," were realized by early Islam[44] which brought into the world "a life of common partnership."[45] Most of the land in the first two centuries of Islam was, we are told, owned by "the generality of the nation," and its fruits were enjoyed by those laboring on it subject only to the payment of the *'ushr* and the *kharaj*.[46] This reveals how superficial was Al-Kawakibi's knowledge of the early Islamic society. And when he proceeds to regard the ineffectual *zakat*—a 2.5 per cent poor tax—as a levelling force and to seize upon it as an evidence of the "equality" and "common partnership" of early Muslims, he leaves us also in doubt as to whether he had understood at all the economic "egalitarianism" that had won his sympathy.

[42] Nowhere in his treatises does Al-Kawakibi elaborate upon this.

[43] *Tabai' Al-Istibdad*, p. 27.

[44] *Umm Al-Kura*, p. 35, and *Tabai' As-Istibdad*, pp. 74–75.

[45] *Ibid.*

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 75. *'Ushr* was the tithe on the land produce and *kharaj* was the tax paid on landed property.

But from our point of view what matters is not whether Al-Kawakibi understood early Islam and "egalitarian" doctrines or otherwise, or whether the Muslim economic tradition lends itself to an egalitarian interpretation or not; the relevant point is that it has been so interpreted and that Islam was associated with communism, even if the association was more verbal than conceptual. In subsequent decades this association became more frequent and was in time to facilitate the acceptance of Communist ideas. The conformity of Islam and communism was, for example, the theme of Muhammad Barkatullah's *Bolshevism and Islam* (1919)[47] and of the anonymous *Mabadi'-ul-Balshafiyyah* ("The Principles of Bolshevism") (1920).[48] The theme was also affirmed in the nineteen-twenties by Muhammad 'Ali Bahr-ul-'Ulum, one of the *'ulama* of the Holy City of Najaf,[49] and by Mirza Muhammad Rida, son of Mirza Muhammad Taki Ash-Shirazi, the chief Shi'ah Mujtahid[50] of his day.[51] The popular Iraqi poet Ma'ruf Ar-Rasafi was in effect but echoing Al-Kawakibi when on June 7, 1937, he rose in the Iraqi House of Deputies and declared:

> I am a Communist . . . but my Communism is Islamic for it is written in the Sacred Book: "And in their wealth there is a right for the beggar and the deprived." . . . And it was the Prophet that said: "Take it from their wealthy and return it to their poor." Was this not Communism? Who would then, but out of ignorance, resist this principle?[52]

Again the relevant point is not the depth of Ma'ruf Ar-Rasafi's knowledge of Islam or of communism.

How the Comintern Took a Direct Hand in Creating the First Communist Cells in the Arab East

We have seen how levelling tendencies existed in the Arab East quite independently of any Bolshevik influence. However, organized Arab communism began on the initiative of the Comintern.

[47] This book was in circulation in Baghdad in 1920. Excerpts from it are in (British) *Abstract of Intelligence*, Vol. 2, No. 5, January 31, 1920. Barkatullah was a famous Indian Pan-Muslim.

[48] Reference to this book is made in Major Wilkins' *File No 283* on Mirza Muhammad Rida.

[49] Source: Major Wilkins' *File No 237* on Muhammad 'Ali Bahr-ul-'Ulum.

[50] A *mujtahid* is an authoritative interpreter of the doctrine of the Shi'ah sect.

[51] Source: Major Wilkins' *File No 283* on Mirza Muhammad Rida.

[52] From the Proceedings of the Iraqi House of Deputies, Session of June 7, 1937, as reported by *Al-Ahali* Year 6 Number 606 of June 8, 1937. Compare the statement of Ar-Rasafi with the remarks of Al-Kawakibi in *Umm Al-Kura*, p. 35.

Until the middle nineteen-twenties the only active Communist organization in the eastern Arab countries was the Palestine Communist Party. Its position at that time was thus described by its chairman, Haim Auerbach, at a secret meeting of the Central Committee of the Party held in Tel-Aviv on March 8, 1927:

> We were the only Communist front in the Arab Orient and in the absence of anybody else we had to pay attention to every question. All the duties in relation to the revolution fell on our shoulders. We had to look into matters relating to Syria, Egypt, and Islamic congresses in Cairo, Mecca, and elsewhere. Our comrades realized the great scope of work, but the International thought that our demands were immoderate . . . We were not glad of our relations with the International; no replies were regularly made to our letters, no decisions were regularly passed in regard to the matters affecting us and we used to receive very small assistance . . . The result was that we were a small party that was burdened with great duties but was deprived of all means necessary for their performance.[53]

The Palestine Party in those days was also handicapped by the almost complete absence of Arabs from its midst. "I should not forget to mention," Auerbach told his Central Committee at the meeting in question,

> the main evil with which our Party was afflicted, namely, that we were composed of a few Jewish persons. It is true that the Party progressed a good deal afterwards and comprised Arab members but it has been a very slow progress. Neither the Third International nor we ourselves are pleased with the results. Everytime we think of executing something, we behold the great necessity of the presence amongst us of a great number of Arabs. This is the Third International's opinion of our real position.

According to Auerbach, the Communist International first took serious interest in the Arab East in December 1926. Arab problems were then discussed "from all points of view" at a meeting which he attended and which was held in Moscow by the Secretariat on Oriental Affairs of the Executive Committee of the International. The consensus of the Secretariat was that the Palestine Party should make greater effort to establish ties with the Arab nationalist movement in Palestine and to create in its midst "associations to be formed by the people's class." The British and French representatives agreed on behalf of their parties to provide assistance in "money and men"

[53] The text of Haim Auerbach's report was passed on to the British "C. I. D." by one of its agents in the Palestine Communist Party. *Abstract of Intelligence of 1927*, paragraph 609, of June 2, 1927, has reference.

to facilitate the tasks of the Palestinian Communists. The Secretariat deemed it necessary to "censure" the latter for their "ambitious demand to monopolize work in contiguous countries" but approved, on their recommendation, the forming of "a Communist centre for the unity of parties in Arab countries." Subsequently, and while Auerbach was still in Moscow, it was also decided to establish two committees to deal with Arab Affairs, one in the Comintern and the other in the Communist Youth International.

It was too clear to the Secretariat on Oriental Affairs that the Communist movement stood little chance of progress in the Arab East as long as its local destinies were in Jewish hands. On its instructions, and with a view to finding a solution for this problem, Pierre Sémard, I. Hochmann, and Elie Teper arrived in Aleppo, Syria, in July 1927.[54] Sémard was in 1925 the chairman of the Politburo of the French Communist Party but at this time only a member of the French Confédération Générale du Travail. I. Hochmann was a delegate of the Profintern.[55] Teper (alias Max Kogal) was the Russian-born vice-chairman of the Palestine Party. Their meeting-place was the office of a certain Fathi Effendi, editor of the newspaper *As-Sabah*. The object of their mission was unwittingly explained by Sémard to an agent of British Intelligence who appears to have been highly placed in the Communist movement.

> We wish—Sémard told the agent—to establish a centre exclusively for Arabs, for the Palestine Communist Party is still too Jewish in composition and we find that Arabs do not like to be associated with Jews. In northern Syria, however, the population is almost exclusively Arab and Moslem and a properly established centre here would undoubtedly attract the masses. Furthermore, Aleppo is near the Turkish frontier, which would not only facilitate the visits of emissaries to Syria and make communications in general much easier than at present but would also give our comrades a better chance of escaping when danger threatens them in Syria.

Subsequently, at a secret conference of the Palestine Party held in Jerusalem on September 10, 1927, Elie Teper gave a long explanation of the policy of the Secretariat on Oriental Affairs. He said that the Communist leadership contemplated creating, in addition to the Aleppo center, a number of sub-centers in other Syrian cities. The headquarters for Syria was to be shifted to Homs if necessary.

[54] Source: a 1928 memorandum from British "C. I. D.," Palestine, to Major Wilkins and *File No 1831* on Elie Teper.

[55] I. e. the Red International of Trade Unions.

Aleppo was to be under the direction of a Jaffa executive, but sub-centers in Syria and Palestine were to report regularly to Aleppo and Jaffa respectively, in order to avoid overlapping and congestion of work. A general meeting of delegates was to be held at each of these main centers once a month, in order to discuss the ways and means of developing their work. The main centers and sub-centers were to be free to draw up their own bylaws within the radius of the general laws of the Third International. Teper also indicated that facilities had been given for sending promising Arab students from Palestine and Syria to the Communist schools which had been opened at Toulon and Cherbourg for the training of young Communists. As to the tasks of the new—and the old—Communist centers, Teper revealed that the Comintern's Oriental Secretariat had laid special emphasis upon the need of encouraging all movements, even those of feudal Amirs or tribal Shaikhs, that tended to weaken British and French colonialism.

The Aleppo center early received a set-back, the French police having arrested one Dorinovich, a liaison between the center and the Jaffa executive. Dorinovich was replaced by a certain Nessim Romanov who, however, came quickly under surveillance. Harassed by the police, the center was unable to achieve much progress. More successful in the long run was a new Communist group that appeared in Beirut in 1928 and that clustered around the paper *Ash-Shams* ("The Sun") and took on the name of "Al-Ahrar" ("The Liberals"). How this group came into being and who were its members remain to be investigated.[56] Our knowledge of it is derived from the documentation we have on its Iraqi counterpart which was formed in Basrah in 1929. We have something to say in reference to its objectives but it is appropriate that we should first attempt to trace the beginnings of communism in Iraq.[57]

We have had occasion to catch a glimpse of the fortunes of Arsen Kitour in the days before the First World War[58] but, as we said, there was in Iraq a sequel to his story. Sometime before the discovery of his connection with the underground Hentchak, Kitour received an appointment to teach history and geography at the Government Sul-

[56] Some clues on the paper *Ash-Shams* may possibly be obtained from the Beirut Public Library. Unfortunately, when I was last in the Arab East, Lebanon was in the throes of a civil war and the library was closed.

[57] I should state here that I have thus far been unable to give very careful consideration to the considerable material I have on Iraqi communism. The sketchy account that follows must, therefore, be regarded as tentative.

[58] See above, pp. 49–50.

taniyyah School in Baghdad.[59] In one of his classes in 1914 sat a boy, eleven years of age, whose life was destined—if our interpretation of certain events of the nineteen-twenties is correct—to cross again with that of his teacher in circumstances of greater moment. The boy grew, according to Iraqis who are in a position to know, into one of the more brilliant intellectuals of contemporary Iraq. I have heard him called "the Iraqi Kasim Amin," although he never had the perseverance of the Egyptian feminist. One thing, however, is not open to dispute: he was the first of the Marxists of Iraq. His name was Husain Ar-Rahhal.

Ar-Rahhal's family originally belonged to the class of the *chalabis*, who in the Iraq of the nineteenth century were merchants of affluence and high social standing. The *chalabis* were apparently accepted by the landed *ashraf* as their equal for there were frequent intermarriages between the two classes. Even as late as 1958 the title "chalabi" had still its fascination for the big merchants of Iraq for to their employees and laborers they were only known as "chalabis" and were always thus addressed.

In the nineteenth century the Rahhal family owned a large fleet of sailing ships and traded on the Iraqi rivers and in the Persian Gulf and with India. Subsequently, however, it lost its wealth partly because many of its ships, which then travelled in fleets, perished in a storm at sea, and partly because of the advent of British steamers on Iraqi waters. Ar-Rahhal's father entered the Turkish officer corps and progressed to senior commands in the Turkish artillery. His military duties took him to many places in Iraq and throughout the Ottoman Empire. His son always accompanied him and had a chance to observe at close range how his people lived and when the closing years of the First World War took him to Europe he could not help making comparisons between their condition and that of the advanced Europeans. The end of the war found young Ar-Rahhal studying in a German high school in Berlin. He was still in the German capital —in fact in a confectioner's shop—when the Communist Spartakusbund threw its barricades up in the streets of the city (January 1919). He recalls turning to someone at the time and asking what it was all about. He was told that the workers wanted to set up a government of their own and he marvelled at so strange a thing. As the sons of some of the participants in the uprising were his schoolmates there was much discussion of the event in the following weeks and this probably accounted for the increasing interest he now took in what

[59] Source: Major Wilkins' *File No 1158* on Arsen Kitour.

the socialist paper *Die Freiheit* ("Freedom") had to say. Soon, however, he was back in his native Baghdad, only to find his countrymen in the throes of restlessness and anxiety. This was 1920, the Year of Calamity—'Am An-Nakbah—when Syria fell to the French and the Arab patrimony was everywhere being torn asunder. In a few months the Iraqi cauldron was boiling over. The conflicts that then raged, the tumultuous overflow of feelings, the fearful tensions, the repressions by the invader, the episodes of devotion and sacrifice—left their indelible mark on the sensibilities of many an Iraqi. Elation at the early victories of the revolt quickly gave way to depression and bitterness. A fancied freedom—the form without the substance—was not what the *Shabibah*[*] had been led to expect. It was in the years that now followed that the disgruntled youth of Iraq began to question many of the things that their elders idealized or took for granted. When the Iraqi poet Jamil Sidki Az-Zahawi, now an old man but still young in spirit, exclaimed in the early nineteen-twenties:

> I am bored with everything old I have known in my life.
> If you have something new, let us have it,

or when in a verse addressed to the eleventh century Arab poet-philosopher Abu-l-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri he said:

> What I admire most in you
> Is your mockery of tradition and your rebellion,

or when exhorting Iraqis:

> Rise in violent anger against old usages
> Rise even against Providence,[60]

he was expressing more than the oddities of a temperamental poet. His mood was the mood of many of the *Shabibah*. Young Ar-Rahhal was part of this atmosphere. He contributed to it—surely more than many others—but he also breathed from it and it had inevitably its effect on the direction of his thought.

But let us retrace our steps to the year after the Iraqi uprising. In the course of that year, i. e. in 1921, Ar-Rahhal left Iraq by way of Basrah, having persuaded his parents to send him back to Europe with a view to resuming his studies. His ship called at Karachi on the way and there for some reason Ar-Rahhal left it and was to stay in India for upwards of a year. What he did in that country besides learning English is not clear. In an interview I had with him

[*] A term then often applied to the youth educated in the modern schools.

[60] From Az-Zahawi's Fifth Collection of Poems entitled *Ad-Diwan Al-Khamis: Al-Awshal* (Baghdad Press, Baghdad), pp. 20 and 66.

he stated in passing that he was detained there by "considerations of a personal nature." In *Jalal Khalid*,* a novel written by Mahmud Ahmad As-Sayyid,[61] and which in part is based upon the experience of Ar-Rahhal, there are repeated references to the hero's communion in India with a revolutionary Indian journalist.[62] At any rate, shortly after his return to Baghdad Ar-Rahhal took to reading *The Labour Monthly* which was then published by Palme Dutt, a young intellectual of Indian birth and a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Ar-Rahhal explained that he first chanced upon the periodical in Mackenzie's Bookshop—a well-known British firm in Baghdad—and purchased his copies from there until the authorities deemed fit to ban it from Iraq.[63]

Whether Ar-Rahhal's path crossed again with that of his former teacher, Arsen Kitour, before or after his trip to India we have no way of knowing. The latter had by now been won to communism. This is borne out by the first entry in his dossier relating to his post-First World War activities. The entry is dated June 14, 1924, and reveals that he met at the Majestic Hotel with Gregory Mikhailovich Laktinov, "a member of the Moscow Extraordinary Commission,"[64] who arrived in Baghdad on June 3 en route for Bushire. Later, in 1926, Kitour was to organize a Baghdad branch of HOK—*Haistani Ognoothian Kommittee* or Helping Armenians Committee—which according to British Intelligence records, originally worked for Armenian independence but subsequently became a Bolshevik society.

It is not possible to say whether it was on his own initiative or on the suggestion of Arsen Kitour or perhaps the prompting of the anonymous revolutionary from India that Husain Ar-Rahhal formed in 1924 what in effect was the first "Marxist" study-circle in Iraq. Most of the persons who closeted themselves with Ar-Rahhal in those days in retired and often heated debates in an inner room of Baghdad's Haidarkhanah Mosque would probably not have identified

* Jalal Khalid is a fictitious name.

61 For As-Sayyid see below, p. 64.

62 *Jalal Khalid* (Baghdad, October 1927), pp. 2, 9-12, and 61.

63 My interviews with Husain Ar-Rahhal were in April 1958. I should perhaps state that I obtained first his version of the events and then made known my acquaintance with the contents of his dossier and read to him the entries made therein by the British police noting, as I did so, the comments that he thought necessary to add.

64 Actually the Extraordinary Commission had by this time given way to the State Political Administration. Among the tasks assigned to this body was the execution of "special" instructions relating to "the protection of the revolutionary order."

themselves as "Marxists" and if asked would have said that theirs was a circle for the study of "new ideas." Ar-Rahhal referred to them simply as "jama'ti"—"my circle."But a cursory glance at their mouthpiece *As-Sahifah* ("The Journal"), which appeared in 1924—1925 and again briefly in 1927, is enough to reveal their pronouncedly Marxist orientation. Their conception of Marxism was derived for the most part from *The Labour Monthly* and from such articles as Ar-Rahhal translated for them from L'Humanité, the organ of the French Communist Party. It is also known that Ar-Rahhal ordered *Das Kapital* through the Mackenzie Bookshop. Among the principal members of the circle were Mahmud Ahmad As-Sayyid, the first novelist of Iraq and the son of the *imam* of the Haidarkhanah Mosque; Muhammad Salim Fattah, then a student at the School of Law, the son of an ex-official of the Ottoman government, and the brother-in-law of Ar-Rahhal; 'Abdallah Jadu', an official of the Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs and the son of a cloth-contractor; and 'Awni Bakr Sidki, a journalist and an official of the Ministry of Education. Ar-Rahhal was at this time still a student in Baghdad's Law School.

When it is realized that in the early nineteen-twenties there was no Communist literature in Arabic and that the Iraqis who could read in any Western language were extremely few, it can be readily appreciated how singularly fitted to help the cause of communism in Iraq was Husain Ar-Rahhal with his unique command of German, French, English, Turkish, and Arabic. Although his circle did not long endure —by 1927 it had broken up—its importance in the history of the Iraqi Communist Party cannot be underestimated. It is enough to mention that:

1) Zaki Khairi, now one of the leading Communists of Iraq, was first introduced to Communist thought by Ar-Rahhal.[65]

2) Aminah Ar-Rahhal, member of the Central Committee of the Party in the nineteen-forties and incidentally one of the first women of Baghdad to unveil, is the sister of Ar-Rahhal.

3) 'Abd-ul-Kader Isma'il, perhaps the most influential Iraqi Communist and the editor of *Ittihad-ush-Sha'b* ("The Unity of the People"), and his brother Yusuf Isma'il, who is also high in Communist ranks, are cousins of Ar-Rahhal's principal companion, Mahmud Ahmad As-Sayyid, on his mother's side and 'Abd-ul-Fattah Ibrahim, an outstanding Iraqi Leftist, his cousin on his father's side.

65 I have this from Zaki Khairi himself whom I interviewed in the prison of Ba'kubah in June 1958.

Obviously the facts just cited also point to the importance of the extended family in the social life of Iraq of the nineteen-twenties and particularly as a means for the propagation of ideas.

It may be asked why Ar-Rahhal's circle did not grow into a movement. Part of the answer may be found in a self-portrait that Ar-Rahhal volunteered. "I was," he said, "only an amateur. Besides, I have always been more interested in theory, in main lines . . ., and I am more an introvert than an extrovert. In truth, I delight in being idle." However, it also appears that the members of the circle could not agree and thus parted company. We gather this much from As-Sayyid's autobiographical novel.[66] As to why they disagreed, the reason had been given long before by Al-Kawakibi. "Each of us," he wrote in 1900, "has become a nation in himself."[67] It is the malady of the Arabs!

At this point we must turn our attention to a man who appears to have been active on behalf of communism even before Ar-Rahhal's circle was formed and whose work in southern Iraq was to lead to distant results: Pyotr or Petros Vasili. Vasili was an Assyrian who grew up and was educated in Tiflis, Georgia, to which city his father had migrated from 'Amadiyyah in northern Iraq in Ottoman days.[68] Like Ar-Rahhal, Vasili was skilled in many tongues. He knew Russian, Georgian, Assyrian, Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. But what distinguished him from Ar-Rahhal and, of course, made all the difference, is that he was a professional revolutionary.

Vasili came to Iraq by way of Persia in 1922 or thereabouts. He did not stay long in any one place. During the decade that ended with his banishment from Iraq in 1933 he lived in Basrah, Baghdad, Ba-'kubah—a centre for the estates of Baghdad's landed families, in Kurdish Sulaimaniyyah, and then again in Iraq's seaport and finally in Nasiriyyah, a town renowned for its free and indomitable spirit. As far as one could tell, he earned his living by working as a tailor. But he was an unusual kind of a tailor for, in a fashion so characteristically unbourgeois, he took time out, while in Nasiriyyah, to teach his competitors the modern methods of tailoring which earned him some popularity among the local inhabitants. He also mixed with the poorer classes and showed great interest in their conditions and was known to have made frequent visits to the peasant countryside in the Muntafik region. He selected his companions in Nasiriyyah and Basrah

[66] See *Jalal Khalid*, p. 68.

[67] See *Umm Al-Kura*, p. 23.

[68] Source: Major Wilkins' *File No 2652* on Vasili.

from among the members of Al-Hizb Al-Watani (The Nationalist Party), a party that had always been in the vanguard of the Iraqi struggle against British influence.

It was, as far as could be ascertained from the records, only in 1932 that the police discovered that Vasili was a Communist preacher. Basrah's C.I.D. Confidential Weekly Diary for the week ending January 7 of that year reported him as being in communication through an Assyrian motor car driver named Ya'kub with a Professor of Oriental Propaganda at the University of Baku by the name of Filimonov who was then living in Kermanshah. Subsequently, he was found to be on close terms with Kirchin and others of the Soviet Trade Agency in Persia.[69]

It is not certain whether Vasili was instrumental in the formation of the first Communist circle of Basrah which appeared in 1927—at the time of his second sojourn in that seaport—and which chose Nadi Ash-Shabibah — the Youth Club — as the center of its activities. In this connection it would help to cite the statement given to the police on January 22, 1934, by 'Abd-ul-Hamid Al-Khatib, a member of that circle, a teacher of Physics at Basrah's Secondary School in 1927, and an *agent provocateur* in 1934.

> Prior to the year 1927—said Al-Khatib—there was no party in Basrah that knew anything about Communism . . . I created such a party and taught its members the Communistic teachings . . . I founded it, organized it, and enrolled its candidates. Our affairs spread even to Nasiriyya and Samawah . . . The most active of my associates were Zakariyyah Elias Duka,[70] Yusuf Salman,[71] Daud Salman,[72] Ghali Az-Zuwayyid,[73] and 'Abd-ul-Kader As-Sayyab[74] . . . The photographs of all these persons and their applications for admission to the Communist Party are in the Soviet Consulate at Ahwaz. I left them there myself . . .[75]

[69] There is no mention in Vasili's dossier of his contact with Kirchin but this is cited in *Abstract of Intelligence*, Vol. XV, No. 21, May 27, 1933, Paragraph 466.

[70] A clerk in the Port Administration.

[71] A supporter of the Nationalist Party, a clerk at the Basrah Electrical Supply Authority, and from Nasiriyyah.

[72] A brother of Yusuf and an electrician.

[73] A member of the Nationalist Party and an agent of the Sa'duns, once the ruling family of the Muntafik tribal confederation.

[74] Unemployed.

[75] I found a copy of this statement in Major Wilkins' *File No 488* on Zakariyyah Elias Duka. The Iraqi Police *File No 7687* on 'Abd-ul-Hamid Al-Khatib did not contain the original.

One would be justified in declining to accept Al-Khatib's version without some reserve. That he himself did not originate the Basrah society cannot be doubted. But whether the initiative was Pyotr Vasili's is not now ascertainable. Al-Khatib might have been brought over to communism by revolutionaries from Muhammarah, a city to the south of Basrah on the Persian side of Shatt-Al-'Arab and then the "seat" of a certain Dr. Tomaniantz who ostensibly practised medicine since his arrival there in 1921 but had been, according to the British Special Service, the "President of the Extraordinary Commission of the Soviet" in Kharkov prior to its fall to Denikin's White Army and was at this time in close connection with Palutkin, Soviet Consul at Ahwaz.[76] What points to the possibility of influence from Muhammarah—although this may be no more than an evidence of the interconnection of Communist fraternities — is Al-Khatib's intimate friendship in the nineteen-twenties with Muhammad Ghuloom, a Persian school teacher in Muhammarah and a supporter of Bolshevism.[77] Al-Khatib himself was of Persian origin and holder of passports from both Iraq and Persia.

On the other hand, it is beyond dispute that at least three of the persons named by Al-Khatib in his statement of January 22, 1934, viz., Yusuf Salman, Daud Salman, and Ghali Az-Zuwayyid, were introduced to communism by Pyotr Vasili. All three were from Nasiriyyah but worked or had dealings in Basrah and soon after the organization of the Basrah society formed the core of the Nasiriyyah Communist circle which came into being around 1928 and provided in the years to come the perseverance that is so rare in Iraq and that was to keep alive the few seeds that had been sown. Indeed the place that Pyotr Vasili will occupy in the history of Iraqi communism — when that history is written — will rest primarily on the fact that it was at his hands that Yusuf Salman had his first lessons in communism, for Yusuf Salman is none other than the now legendary "Fahd," the real builder of the Iraqi Communist Party and its Secretary General from 1943 till his death on the gallows with two of his comrades in February of 1949.

It only remains to discuss briefly the first open association formed by the Nasiriyyah and Basrah circles in coordination with the Beirut Committee: Jam'iyyat Al-Ahrar or Al-Hizb Al-Hurr Al-Ladini.[78]

[76] Source: Major Wilkins' *File No 937* on Dr. Tomaniantz.

[77] Source: Iraqi Police *File No 7687* on 'Abd-ul-Hamid Al-Khatib.

[78] See also above, pp. 49 and 60.

The Basrah branch of what to the authorities was then simply "a Syrian non-denominational organization"[79] appeared in January 1929 under the sponsorship of Nadi Ash-Shabibah.[80] Early police reports indicated that the new association was "calling the people to brotherhood irrespective of their religion." A subsequent memorandum by Baghdad's C.I.D. asserted that its advocates also

> believe in no religion and any sin before them has no value. Their talk and principles are such that in the long run they might not care even for the government.

At first the society had little echo and appears to have attracted mostly minor government officials of the Muslim and Christian faith.[81] But by August 1 it had progressed so far in disseminating its ideas as to give occasion to the following remark by Basrah's Inspector of Police:

> Nowadays in every place of gathering the question of Al-Ladini is being discussed and the result is sometimes hot words between the parties.

When it became apparent that the society was beginning to branch out to Baghdad and other places, the government hastened to suppress it. And thus ended the first—and for the next two decades the only—Communist experiment in open existence. It was only a few years later that the Communists realized that they had begun the wrong way and that in the Iraq of 1929 the last question that should have been brought out was the question of religion.

Fortunately our view of Jam'iyyat Al-Ahrar does not have to rest entirely on the testimony of the police, for the text of its programme has been preserved. The principal passages of what in fact is the earliest statement of Communist intentions may appropriately be quoted here:

> The Principles of Jam'iyyat Al-Ahrar
> are
> Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality!
> You were born free. Live free!

[79] Source: Iraqi Police File on "Al-Hizb Al-Hurr Al-Ladini."

[80] See above, p. 66.

[81] Among the leading members of the society apart from Yusuf Salman, Daud Salman, Ghali Az-Zuwayyid, 'Abd-ul-Hamid Al-Khatib, and 'Abd-ul-Kader As-Sayyab were 'Abd-ul-Zahra, a wireless operator; 'Abd Muhammad, a clerk at the Railways; Ghuloom Bastaki, a librarian; Mahdi Wasfi, a student at Baghdad's Higher Teachers' College; Hanna Balaya and Yusuf Daud, clerks at the Basrah Port; George Stephan, a contractor; and Andrea 'Isa, a postal official. The last four persons as well as Yusuf and Daud Salman were Christians. All the rest were Muslims.

The Association seeks:

1) to liberate the mind, the soul, and the body, and to propagate by every legal means the freedom of thought, speech, and action;

2) a) to work unsparingly by all lawful methods for the separation of religion from all temporal affairs, i. e., from "politics," "education," "family life," etc. . . .

b) to protest strongly . . . against any religious action injurious to the unity of the people;

3) to spread religious tolerance . . . in all the Arab countries . . .

4) to realize its aims through legislative changes . . . and by participation in parliamentary elections . . .

5) to expose how far the clerics have deviated in their behavior from the original essence of religion, considering that the religions have been the principal cause of discord and that the sublime aim of the association is to unite the scattered forces of the people . . .

7) to liberate the Arab woman from all fetters . . .

9) . . . to regard all Arab countries as one country.

It must be stated that the original of this document was prepared in Beirut in 1928 apparently sometime before the convening of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. This may explain its moderate tone, its emphasis on legal and constitutional methods, and its predilections for the ideals of the French Revolution. Obviously the assessment was that the Arab countries were then ripe for "the bourgeois phase" of historical development. It is also worth mentioning that the Programme recalls the anti-clerical tendencies that appeared in Lebanon in the months after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution,[82] which suggests that the early Communists of that country drew upon existing feelings and may have been nourished by elements that were already predisposed in their direction. One last striking feature of the Programme is its Pan-Arab orientation. This is also reflected in the Rules of Jam'-iyyat Al-Ahrar. Articles 3 and 9 of these Rules, for example, envisaged the extension of the activities of the association to all the Arab countries, while Article 4 required all adherents to swear their allegiance by "the honor of Arabism and the sacred homeland." It is not without significance in this regard that the first placards to appear in Iraq with the emblem of the hammer and the sickle — and that were posted up in Nasiriyyah on the night of December 13, 1932 — held up the watchword: "Long Live the Union of Workers' and Peasants' Republics of

[82] See above, p. 48.

the Arab Countries!"[83] In fact my investigations have led me to conclude not only that Arab communism began as a Pan-Arab movement but that the Communist parties were the first organizations in the Arab countries to include the Arabs of Egypt and of North Africa within the purview of the Arab national idea. This is a conclusion that can here only be stated as its development will take us far afield.[84]

At this point we must bring to an end these preliminary observations on the beginnings of communism in the Arab East and only hope that we have succeeded in shedding some light on a subject that has been and largely remains shrouded in obscurity.

[83] The text of this placard has been preserved. *Abstract of Intelligence of 1932*, Paragraph 1058 of December 14, 1932, has reference.

[84] I well remember my surprise when I discovered in the records that it was under Communist auspices that the first All-Arab Congress—oddly enough called "Mu'tamar-uj-Jami'at-il-'Arabiyyah," i. e. "the Arab League Congress"—which was intended to bring together nationalist delegates from all the Arab countries from Morocco to Iraq, met in Frankfurt, Germany in July 1929. The Congress was not much of a success.

Summary of the Discussion

The chairman of the session, Professor Farhat Ziadeh, opened the discussion period by inviting questions. The first question was addressed to Colonel G. E. Wheeler and concerned the susceptibility of the new Turkish regime to Soviet pressure.

Colonel Wheeler explained that he had not wanted to give the impression in this report that Turkey was now more susceptible to Soviet pressure. What he had meant was that with the change in the regime in Turkey the Russians may consider it appropriate to bring up new and possibly highly embarrassing subjects to the attention of the new Turkish government. The Turks turned down Soviet demands in 1945 but now that a new situation exists in Turkey the Soviets may want to try again. This does not mean, of course, that the new Turkish government is veering towards the left.

The next question queried the "dominance" of Arabs in the Communist Party of Israel. Mr. John Batatu replied that the Arabs were an underprivileged community in that country. This coupled with the special circumstances arising out of the tragedy of the Palestinian people could account for the *relatively* large percentage of Arabs in the Party.

Mr. Batatu also replied to the next question which dealt with the spread of communism among workers in the oil companies. On the basis of an analysis he made of the composition of the Iraqi Communist Party in the years 1946–49, he felt that although the workers who were members of the Party were not heavily concentrated in any one place but were thinly dispersed among the different factories and workshops of the major Iraqi towns, the largest concentration of them at that time was in the Kirkuk oil center. He added that the oil workers were relatively better paid than workers in other industries but this did not necessarily imply that Communist ideas were bound to have less attraction for them. In fact the majority of the laboring Communist membership was recruited from the skilled and better paid workers rather than from the unskilled and poorly remunerated stratum.

The discussion then turned to the question of Soviet policy regarding oil. According to Colonel Wheeler, it is doubtful that the Soviets have a clear-cut oil policy on Middle East oil. He believed the Soviets do not want to cheapen its value by cutting prices on their own oil. This would be too drastic a measure to conform with present Soviet policies. The Soviet Union wants, for the present, a period of quiet to permit the country to go ahead with its own plans. The Soviet Union would, therefore, approach the whole question of oil with caution. It is, of course, difficult to prognosticate but at least there is nothing to be found in the Soviet press and publications about oil except the desire to denigrate the West's connection with the Middle East oil industry. The Soviets are hammering at the latter as hard as they can and find the oil consortium in Iran most offensive.

Mr. Saadat Hasan was called upon to answer the question regarding the differences between Arab communism and Soviet policy in the Middle East. Arab countries, stated Mr. Hasan, maintain, as do other countries in the world, diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. This, however, does not mean that the Arabs are importing Communist ideology. There is a distinction between the Soviet Union acting as a state according to its national interests and communism as a doctrine. Communism may have an appeal to those Arabs who want quick action to achieve better living conditions in the Arab world. Such people are not satisfied with an evolutionary process of development. They look upon the Soviet Union and China as having successfully experimented with communism and feel that they should become more active themselves. The appeal of communism, however, is limited. Highly educated Arabs and Arab nationalists have, by and large, not accepted communism as an ideology. They differentiate between the Soviet Union as a power and communism as an ideology, a way of life, and a system. The only Arab country in which the Communist Party was made legal recently is Iraq. However, the Iraqi Communist Party is weak and its membership split.

Mr. Batatu, who supplemented Mr. Hasan's remarks, doubted whether it would be correct to assume that communism appealed only to the "pseudo-intellectuals" of the Arab countries. Whatever one's opinion of the Arab intellectual class as a whole may be, it should be granted that some of the Communists belonged to the most advanced sections of the Arab intelligentsia.

At 5 : 02 P. M. the chairman closed the discussion.

Notes on Participants

The morning session was chaired by TIBOR HALAŠI-KUN, associate professor at Columbia University.

The first speaker was RICHARD N. FRYE, Aga Khan Professor of Iranian at Harvard University.

The second speaker, RICHARD PIPES, is associate professor of history at Harvard University.

The last speaker at the morning session was GARIP SULTAN, member of the Institute for the Study of the USSR.

The afternoon session was chaired by FARHAT ZIADEH, associate professor at Princeton University.

The first speaker was COL. G. E. WHEELER, Director of the Central Asian Research Centre in London, England.

The second speaker, SAADAT HASAN, is chief of Press and Public Liaison at the Arab States Delegation in New York.

The last speaker, JOHN BATATU, received his doctorate in Russian and Arab area studies from Harvard University where he is presently research associate.